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JOURNAL OF EARLY AMERICAN NUMISMATICS

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Editor's Preface

The first issue of *JEAN* was well-received. Our subscriber base is up significantly over the past two years and with the new format we are finding greater acceptance with libraries and universities. This publication has received and continues to receive strong support from ANS, which is actively promoting it around the world.

I want to welcome Julia Casey to *JEAN*'s editorial staff. Looking back over old issues of *CNL*, I could find no record of a woman having an editorial role with this publication and there is no more deserving person—man or woman—than Julia to take this post. Unlike the other people associated with this publication, Julia is probably unknown to most of our readers; however, she is the best numismatic researcher I know. The publication you are holding is substantially better because of her contributions. When I invited Julia to join us I believed she would be a positive force, but I was unprepared for just how great her contributions would be. On several occasions she has received a draft manuscript and gone out on her own and uncovered key information that was incorporated into the finished product. She is simply amazing, and I am honored to welcome her to the editorial committee and look forward to working with her for many years to come.

I would also like to thank Jeff Rock for his assistance over the years. Jeff has read and commented on virtually every article published in these pages since I became editor. In addition, he has written several articles. Jeff has also encouraged others to publish their research here and introduced Ye' Editor to prospec-

tive authors. He has done all of this while receiving little recognition and no compensation for his efforts. I wish to publicly recognize Jeff for his hard work on behalf of this journal and thank him.

This issue features three articles by the same author—Gary Trudgen. About a year ago, Gary asked me if I was going to continue my work on the Atlee Brewery, in which he was very interested. I informed him that I had moved on to other projects and probably would not revisit the topic for many years, if ever. I am very glad Gary decided to pick up my research as he has done a far better job than I could ever have hoped to do. He has uncovered new information that substantially contributes to our numismatic knowledge. While looking into the Atlee Brewery, Gary came across new information on Walter Mould. We have suspected that Mould was a charlatan for some time, but Gary has found documentation from England that proves it. His article explains how Mould's hidden criminal conviction for counterfeiting impacted his involvement with the New Jersey coinage. In his second article, Gary tells the story of the case of *The People v. Counterfeit Coppers*. This article recounts litigation over a group of counterfeits in New York City in 1786 and provides us with insight into counterfeits that were circulating in the city at the time. Gary's main article involves the Atlee counterfeiting operation in New York City and sheds light on the coins produced and the nature of a large scale counterfeiting operation. Because all three of these articles deal with the same era and are loosely connected, I thought it best to publish them all at once rather than over the next two issues.

David Gladfelter, a man whom I have come to know and respect over the last six months, has submitted a short article regarding this publication's beginnings. Since David has been with us from the beginning, there is no one better suited to tell this story. I am actively encouraging David to provide us with an article on the evolution of anti-counterfeiting features on colonial paper money and hope he will agree to share his thoughts on that subject in a future issue.

Most everything you thought you knew about Rhode Island ship medals is wrong. They are not English propaganda pieces foisted on the Dutch to convince them to turn their backs on the proposed 1780 Treaty of Armed Neutrality. The argument that they could have only been produced in England is meritless as the technology and materials to make them existed in Holland in 1779. Many of our mistaken beliefs regarding ship medals derive from an ignorance of the historical context in which they were minted. When examined in the proper historical context it makes little sense that Lord North's administration or the Admiralty would authorize the minting of a token honoring Admiral Richard Howe's leadership at the Battle of Rhode Island as Howe was a hated political opponent of both Lord North and the First Lord of the Admiralty. Numismatic researchers

have a bad habit of simply repeating other people's work without confirming its accuracy—as a result, incorrect assumptions made 30 years or more ago turn into accepted facts today. In my article on Rhode Island ship medals, I seek to pierce the fog of past research to discover the true origin of this coinage.

The final article in this issue will be controversial as it goes against the prevailing theory that Continental Dollars were produced and distributed in Europe. John Kleeberg has prepared an article setting forth his views on the subject and arguing in favor of an American origin for this coinage. Not everyone will agree with John's opinions. Indeed, some members of *JEAN*'s own editorial committee have expressed strong opposition to John's conclusions, while others applaud his efforts. The fact that we are publishing this article does not mean that everyone is on board with it, but I feel that tapping the brakes on the groupthink that says this coinage was definitively produced in Europe is healthy. The only thing I believe I know for sure at this point is that the Continental Dollar coinage was not authorized or produced by the Continental Congress in 1776. This opinion, which is the norm today, would have labelled me a heretic just a few short years ago. Things are not always what they appear. I am a criminal defense attorney when I'm not working on *JEAN*—I once represented a man who was identified by his own mother as the man in a video robbing a bank. Later I discovered he had an ironclad alibi and the prosecution was forced to dismiss the charges after another man who looked like my client was caught with the dye-stained money from the bank and confessed. I only ask that you read John's article with an open mind. If you disagree with his evidence or conclusions, I will provide you space in the next issue to state your case. It is only from a respectful debate (which requires two sides) that we will ever reach the truth. This should not be taken as an indication that Ye' Editor is running from the piece. I personally believe that John makes several valid points that should be given serious consideration. Although I still lean towards a European origin for the coinage, I do not think it is an open and shut case and I am glad to provide space in this publication to authors who have differing opinions.

Onward to the future—I am working hard on articles for next year and believe the progress we have made over the past few years will be sustained, if not surpassed. I have already lined up several great articles for 2019 including something special from Dave Bowers for the next issue. If you hear of a person who has made an important discovery or you wish to publish your own research please feel free to contact me.

Christopher R. McDowell, Editor
Cincinnati, Ohio



Walter Mould: Convicted Felon

GARY A. TRUDGEN (VESTAL, NEW YORK)

Numismatists with an interest in the state coinages have long been aware of a report in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, a London periodical first published in 1731, concerning the arrest of a man who may have later been instrumental in the coinage of New Jersey coppers.¹ The report dated February 10, 1776 reads:

Two sets of coiners were apprehended in the neighbourhood of Bristol; one set at Kingswood, the other in Dowry-square, Bristol Hotwells. At the first place they found Cockran, Marler, and Mary Hopkins, in the room where the press was fixed, with the dyes in it, and the criminals at work; at the other place they found Mould and his wife with a great many tools belonging to the coining business. Mould formerly lived near Salthill, and kept his carriage the better to carry on the business of coining without suspicion.

Twelve days later, February 22, 1776, a detailed report of the same arrests appeared in the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*. This report read:

1. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, volume 46 (February, 1776), pp. 92–93.

Saturday the 10th inst. Two of Sir John Fielding's² officers were sent to a place called Kingswood, about three miles from Bristol, where they apprehended William Cockran, John Marler, and Mary Hopkins, in the room where a press was fixed for coining half-pence, with the dyes in it, and themselves at work. They afterwards went to Mr. Mould's, (who kept a house in Dowry-square, Bristol Hot-Wells, which cost 2000£ building) where he and his wife were apprehended, and a great quantity of tools, used in the coining business, were found. They then apprehended one Williams, who keeps the Bull-inn in High street, who is charged with buying the half-pence (under value) of the above coiners. On searching his house a press was found fixed in his garret for cutting out the round blanks for making half-pence and a quantity of seissell [scissel].³ Monday, the 12th, they were examined before the Mayor at the Council House, who committed Cockran, Marler, Hopkins, Mould, and his wife, to Gloucester (sic) gaol to take their trials for coining at the next assizes, and Williams, the inn-keeper, to Newgate, in Bristol, to take his trial at the next gaol delivery for the city for buying the halfpence under their value.

Cockran was the person who formerly coined in Leicester-house, and afterwards at Angel-house, Hammersmith; Mould formerly lived near Salt-hill, and kept his chariot to carry on his business with the greater deception; at the Hot-Wells he passed for a man of fortune, but on examination before the Mayor, he proved to be a person who lately lived a servant to Dr. Jebb in London; Williams formerly live in Spitalfields, and has not resided above eight months in Bristol.

Was the man who was identified only as "Mould" in both reports the same Walter Mould who petitioned the New Jersey Legislature, along with Albion Cox and Thomas Goadsby, for a copper coinage contract in 1786? Numismatic writers have speculated that it could have been, but no proof has been offered that it actually was the same person: until now.

The newspaper report explains that the arrests had targeted a counterfeiting ring within the Bristol area, consisting of six people. Bristol is a port city in southwestern England. It was founded around 1000 AD and is situated on the Frome and Avon Rivers. William Cockran, John Marler, and Mary Hopkins

2. Sir John Fielding (1721–1780) was a notable English magistrate and social reformer in the eighteenth century. He was the younger half-brother of Henry Fielding, a novelist, playwright, and chief magistrate.

3. Scissel is the scrap produced when planchets are punched from a strip or sheet of metal.

were found in Kingswood, a suburb on the eastern limits of Bristol, where they were caught in the act of stamping halfpence. Mould and his wife were taken in Dowry Square, a section of the Hotwells district in the western part of Bristol, where a large amount of tools used for coining was found. They had previously lived near Salt Hill, a district in Buckinghamshire in southern England, near London. The report goes on to say that Mould put on airs as a man of fortune, was living in an expensive house, and kept a carriage⁴ in order to put forth a respectable front. But in reality, he had recently worked as a servant to Dr. Jebb⁵ in London. Williams, who was not mentioned in *The Gentleman's Magazine* report, was an innkeeper who ran the Bull Inn located in High Street in Bristol. He was charged with buying counterfeit halfpence from the others at a discounted value. It was also found that he had a cutting press in his attic for making halfpence blanks. Williams was taken to Newgate Prison in Bristol for trial while the other five were taken to the Gloucester jail for trial.

The six individuals arrested on February 10, 1776, would have been tried in a court of assize⁶ to determine their guilt. In 1771, a new law aimed at counterfeiting copper coins had been passed making the offense a felony. Under the previous 1742 law, counterfeiting copper coins was a misdemeanor.⁷ Some prison records from this time still exist for the Bristol area. A Calendar of Prisoners for Gloucestershire⁸ shows that four of the six people arrested were incarcerated in the Castle Gaol located within the city of Gloucester, about 32 miles northeast of Bristol.

Figure 1 shows clippings taken from the October 8, 1776 Michaelmas⁹ sessions of the court. As shown by the Calendar, the individuals found guilty of counterfeiting were William Cockran, Mary Hopkins, and Walter Mould.¹⁰ This primary source document confirms that the person named Mould in the arrest

4. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only someone well-to-do could afford to keep a carriage.

5. Dr. Richard Jebb (1729–1787) was an English physician and noted for his success as a society doctor and royal physician. He became a favorite of George III, and in 1777 he was granted a crown lease of Trent Park in northern London where he built a villa. He had a private practice when Mould worked for him.

6. Assize is a court that sat at intervals in each county in early England to administer the civil and criminal law.

7. Eric P. Newman, "American Circulation of English and Bungtown Halfpence," *Studies on Money in Early America*, Chapter 10, American Numismatic Society, 1976, p. 138.

8. Gloucestershire, England Calendar of Prisoners 1753–1790.

9. The court sessions were held during Christian festivals. Michaelmas, also known as the Feast of Saint Michael, is a minor festival observed in some Western liturgical calendars on September 29.

10. The use of the word "severally" within the Calendar means "individually." Thus, the three people listed were individually convicted of the same offense.

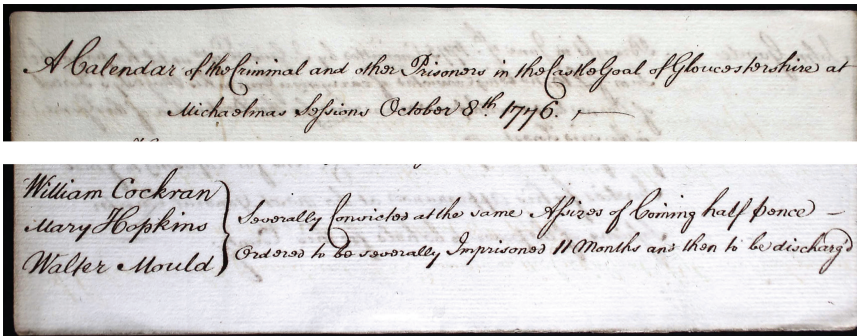


Figure 1. Calendar of Prisoners. Transcription:

A Calendar of the Criminal and other prisoners in the Castle Goal (*sic*) of Gloucestershire at Michaelmas sessions October 8, 1776.

William Cockran	} Severally convicted at the same Assizes of Coining half pence Ordered to be severally imprisoned 11 Months and then to be discharged
Mary Hopkins	
Walter Mould	

the King's Highway; and Susannah Underwood, (not fifteen Years of Age) for setting her Master's Barn on Fire.—**Walter Mould**, Mary Hopkins, William Cockran, and John Marlet, for coining Halfpence, found guilty of Felony: **Martha** the Wife of **Walter Mould**, was acquitted, — John Evans, an Accomplice with John Gilbert, found guilty of simple Felony, — William Winter, for stealing several Things the Property of Christopher

Figure 2. Results of the trial as reported in the *Oxford Journal* of April 6, 1776.

report was indeed Walter Mould! The other important information gleaned from the Calendar is that they were imprisoned for a period of 11 months. They were committed to the Castle Gaol sometime in early April, as shown by the April 16, 1776 sessions of the court, and they should have been released in March of 1777.¹¹ Mould's wife, Martha, was acquitted and John Marler received a lesser sentence of three months (Fig. 2). The fate of inn-keeper Williams is unknown.

A 1777 report claimed that the conditions in the Castle were unfavorable, but no specifics were given. Walter Mould probably spent a tough 11 months at the Castle. Figure 3 shows an illustration of the Castle Gaol as it would have

11. After being released, William Cockran was arrested again for burglary in June (Northampton Mercury, June 6, 1777) and executed in August (Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette, August 7, 1777, p. 3).



Figure 3. Castle Gaol in Gloucester. It was torn down in 1787 and replaced with a new jail in 1791.

appeared during Mould's incarceration. Perhaps during this period of his life he determined to seek a fresh start by immigrating to America, even though war was raging in the rebellious colonies.

While Walter languished in gaol, his wife and children were destitute, plus Martha was pregnant again.¹² She probably sold what she could in order to subsist but eventually she had to move back to London and enter herself and the younger children into the workhouse.¹³ She was admitted on November 14, 1776, along with 2-year old William and 4-year old Ann. Sadly William died in the workhouse on February 16, 1777, and Martha's pregnancy came full term with the birth of Sophia on March 8, 1777. After Walter was released from custody he apparently traveled back to London, and Martha discharged herself and the children from the workhouse on June 24, 1777.

It is not known exactly when Walter boarded a ship for America, but some genealogists believe he arrived sometime in 1781. Also, it has not been determined what became of his wife and children in England. He had a choice of settling in New York City, occupied by the British Army and under military authority, or going behind the American lines. He chose the latter indicating that he

12 Walter Mould's first wife is thought to be Martha Price. She and Walter were married in London on October 22, 1765, at Saint Bartholomew, The Less.

13. London, England Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1764—1930.

New-York, Sept. 1, 1785. 55

Walter Mould,

At No. 23, Corner of Ann and William Street,
Near the North Church,
Has for sale at the Manufacturers Price,
The following Articles :

AN elegant assortment of plated Goods,
low priced Jewellery, set Knee Buckles,
from one to three Dollars a pair, Shoe Buckles
and other articles in the Jewellery Line, equally
low.

Japan'd Goods, such as Tea and Coffee Urns,
Trays and Waiters, with a great variety of
other articles in the japan'd way,
Plated, metal and steel Buttons,
Plated and metal Buckles, Stirrups and Spurs,
Bridles plated Bits,
Cutlery and Ironmongery, very good Fowling
Pieces.

Fine Tutannia Plates, Table and Tea Spoons,
nearly equal to Silver in colour,
Iron and brass pipe Chamber Bellows,
A quantity of Womens and Taylors Thim-
bles, Shoe, Cloaths and other Brushes,
Cabinet Furniture,
A quantity of Watch Glasses.
Copper Plates, Seals, &c. engraved in the
gentelest Taste. 44

Figure 4. Walter Mould's ad in the September 1, 1785 issue of the *New-York Morning Post*.

had had enough of his home country's authority. Walter Mould was 41 years old in 1781. He was born on July 20, 1740, at Saint Matthew Parish, in Walsall, Staffordshire, on the outskirts of Birmingham, England. When he came to America, we are told that he first settled in Morristown, New Jersey, where he married Lydia Mizell in 1783, a 23-year-old from Monmouth, New Jersey.¹⁴ Hostilities virtually came to a halt in America after Cornwallis was defeated at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 19, 1781. After the Treaty of Paris was signed on September 3, 1783, officially ending the war, the British Army evacuated New York City on November 25, 1783, and people flooded back into the city. Walter and his new wife were part of that movement, settling at 23 William Street where he attempted to make an honest living as a merchant. However, businesses struggled

14. Amanda B. Campbell, www.ancestryinstitution.com, December 30, 2017. Any information concerning Walter's early days in America is suspect because this information is not currently supported by primary sources.

after the war as the economy fell into a deep depression from which it took a full decade to recover.

Figure 4 shows an ad that he placed in a local newspaper, the *New-York Morning Post*, on September 1, 1785. Besides advertising the diverse merchandise he had for sale, he also sought work as an engraver, a skill he acquired while in England. It is obvious from primary source information, however, that he still had a desire to use his engraving skill in the production of coins, even though it had landed him behind bars in 1776. He associated with people that had similar desires. As will be shown later, John Bailey, the well-to-do cutler and coiner, financially backed Mould when he moved to the city.

In early 1784 Mould traveled back to England on business for James Jarvis, the future Connecticut and Fugio coiner.¹⁵ In his letter to Jarvis, he hints at setting up a clandestine mint in New York City. In 1785 he petitioned the Continental Congress twice for a Federal coinage grant;¹⁶ the first in May in union with Solomon Simon and Myer Myers, and the second in August with Edward Bergen. Neither of these petitions materialized. Finally, on June 1, 1786, he obtained a copper coinage grant from the State of New Jersey in partnership with Albion Cox and Thomas Goadsby. The coinage grant was widely published in the newspapers of the day.

Mould's New Jersey partnership quickly dissolved when troubling revelations about his past came to light. On June 15, 1786, the *Daily Advertiser*, a New York-area newspaper, reprinted the arrest report regarding the Bristol counterfeiters that had appeared in the English newspapers a decade earlier warning that some of the people arrested may now be in this country. Somebody had seen Mould's surname in a copy of the *Universal Magazine* for February 1776 and asked the newspaper to reprint the arrest report. Perhaps this person held a grudge against Walter and this was his way of seeking retaliation (Fig. 5). Cox and Goadsby evidently became aware of the notice and petitioned the New Jersey Legislature for a division of the coinage grant so that they might independently coin New Jersey coppers. The request was granted giving them the right to coin two million coppers and Mould one million coppers. As a successful businessman, it is likely that Goadsby insisted on the parting as he was very opinionated and outspoken, a trait that had got him arrested and brought before

15. Dennis P. Wierzba, "A Link between Walter Mould and James Jarvis," *C4 Newsletter* Summer 1999, p. 24.

16. Marc Mayhugh, "A Walter Mould Coinage Proposal," *C4 Newsletter* Spring 2004, p. 14.

A CORRESPONDENT requests a place in the Daily Advertiser for the following information, extracted from the Universal Magazine for Feb. 1776. There is reason to suppose that more than one of the stigmatized persons, are, at this day, mingling with the good people of the United States---But if one impostor only should be detected in consequence of this hint, the writer will think his endeavours to serve the unwary public not thrown away.

Should there be any person, whose name, former residence and present employment, may answer, or be similar to those of any of the parties below described, his feelings may, indeed, receive a wound; but, if innocent, the cure is his own---and the public will expect his justification.

“FEBRUARY 16.

“ON Saturday the 10th instant two of fir John Fielding's officers were sent to a place called Kingswood, about three miles from Bristol, where they apprehended William Cochran, John Marler and Mary Hopkins, in the room where a press was fixed for coining halfpence, with the dyes in it, and themselves at work. They afterwards went to Mr. Mould's (who kept a house in Dowry-square, Bristol Hot Wells, which cost 2,000l. building) where he and his wife were apprehended, and a great quantity of tools, used in the coining business, was found. They then apprehended one Williams, who kept the Bull-inn, in High-street, in the city of Bristol, who is charged with buying the halfpence (under value) of the above coiners. On searching his house, a press was found fixed in his garret for cutting out the round blanks for making halfpence, and a quantity of scissel. On Monday the 12th, they were examined before the mayor at the Council-house, who committed Cochran, Marler, Hopkins, Mould and his wife, to take their trials for coining at the next Gloucester assizes, and Williams, the inn-keeper, to Newgate, in Bristol, to take his trial at the next gaol delivery for that city, for buying the halfpence under their value.

“Cochran was the person, who formerly coined in Leicester-house, and afterwards at Angel-house, Hammermith. Mould formerly lived near Salt-Hill, and kept his chariot, to carry on his business with the greater deception: At the Hot-Wells he passed for a man of fortune; but on examination before the mayor, he proved to be a person who lately lived a servant to doctor Jebb, in London. Williams formerly lived in Spittlefields, and has not resided eight months in Bristol.”

Figure 5. *Daily Advertiser* notice.

City of New-York, ss.

PERSONALLY appeared berore me, Jeremiah Wool, one of the Aldermen of the said city, John Bailey, of the said city of New-York, cutler, who being duly sworn deposeeth and faith, That sine, the fifteenth day of April, 1788, he hath not either by himself or others, made or struck any Coppers, bearing the impressiion of those circulated by the State of New-Jersey, commonly called Jersey coppers: And that what he so made previous to the said fifteenth of April, was in conformity to, and by authority derived from an act of the State of New-Jersey, entitled, ‘ An act for the establishment of a coinage of copper in that State,’ passed June the first, 1786.

JOHN BAILEY.

Sworn this first day of August, 1789,
Before me, JEREMIAH WOOL, Alderman.

Figure 6. *New-York Packet*, August 11, 1789.

the New York Legislature the previous year¹⁷ for protesting a city tax that he felt did not apply to him.

After being ostracized, Mould set about establishing his own mint in order to meet his obligations to the state. Returning to Morristown, New Jersey, he located his mint on the property owned by John Cleves Symmes, known as Solitude. Symmes, a New Jersey political leader, became interested in the settlement of Ohio and land speculation. Walter was hard-pressed to meet his royalty payments to the state, and near the end of his mint operation he turned to his creditor back in New York City, John Bailey, for help in the production of New Jersey coppers.¹⁸ An affidavit by Bailey that was published in the local newspapers during the Coppers Panic¹⁹ stating that he had legally made New Jersey coppers prior to April 15, 1788, and that he had not minted any since (Fig. 6).

17. Hodder, Michael J., *The Colonial Newsletter*, “The Case against Thomas Goadsby,” August 1997, p. 1701.

18. For a detailed discussion of the Morristown Mint refer to the book *New Jersey State Coppers*. Published in 2013 jointly by the American Numismatic Society and the Colonial Coin Collectors Club and authored by Roger S. Siboni, John L. Howes, and A. Buell Ish, this book is an excellent resource for information about the New Jersey copper coinages.

19. In 1789 the public lost all confidence in circulating copper coins due to the large number of counterfeits and the value at which they were accepted in commerce plummeted. For an in-depth analysis of the Coppers Panic see Philip Mossman’s *Money of the American Colonies and Confederation*, Chapter 8, American Numismatic Society, 1993.

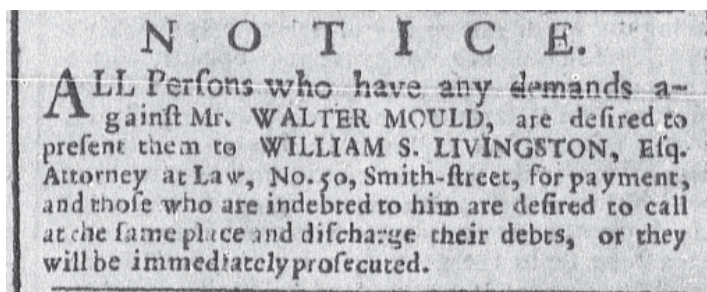


Figure 7. *Daily Advertiser*, July 7, 1786.

After securing the New Jersey coinage grant and moving back to New Jersey, Walter took legal action in an attempt to settle his finances within the city. First, he hired attorney William S. Livingston in July 1786 (Fig. 7) and one year later on July 7, 1787, Walter appointed William Alexander as his attorney giving him power to collect any debts due to Walter in the New York City area. This document was witnessed by Thomas Thomas and John H. Russell.²⁰ For some reason, Walter quickly became dissatisfied with Alexander, and on November 24, 1787, he revoked the Power of Attorney and reassigned it to John Jarvis.²¹ These documents were witnessed by John Bailey and John H. Russell (see the Appendix for transcriptions of these documents).²²

While at Solitude, Mould's wife became close friends with Symmes' wife, Mary. On July 18, 1788, Symmes set out for the Ohio territory. The Moulds, along with their two small children, Elizabeth and Walter, Jr., accompanied him in order for Walter to escape debtors' prison due to debts that he could not pay.²³ The rigors of the journey were too much for Walter and he died in Lexington, Kentucky, in the spring of 1789, aged 49. Perhaps the time he spent at the Castle Gaol in England had already adversely affected his health.

20. William Alexander was initially Samuel Atlee's partner in the porter brewery but he left the business on June 7, 1785, after Samuel's son James and John Perkin joined the partnership. Thomas Thomas was a coppersmith and tinsmith who apparently helped Samuel repair the damaged brewery before it reopened in May 1784. John H. Russell was a silversmith located in Morristown, New Jersey.

21. John Jarvis is probably a relative of James Jarvis. A notice dated October 23, 1787, was published in the *Daily Advertiser* that John Jarvis was an insolvent debtor. Perhaps Walter reassigned the Power of Attorney in an effort to help the relative of his former business associate James Jarvis.

22. New York City Conveyances, Liber 44, pp. 316, 423, and 424.

23. General Matthias Ogden was threatening to place Walter Mould in debtors' prison for failure to pay his obligation on the Daniel Marsh lease. See *New Jersey State Coppers*, p. 27.

THE PEOPLE of the STATE
of New-York, by the Grace of God,
FREE and INDEPENDENT.

To John Bailey of the City of New York Cutler
a Creditor of Walter Mould late an Inhabitant of
Kentuckie Merchant deceased ———— Send Greeting.

KNOW all MEN by these Presents, That We John
Bailey of the City of New York Cutler Samuel Loundon of the
same place Printer and Henry Will of the same place
Pewterer ————
are held and firmly bound unto the People of the State of New-York, in the Sum of four hundred
Pounds ————
Current Money of the said State; to be paid to the said People, to which Payment well and truly to be made,
we do bind ourselves, and each of us, our and each of our Heirs, Executors and Administrators, jointly and
severally, firmly by these Presents, sealed with our Seals, dated the first Day of February
in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety and in the Fourteenth
Year of our Independence

Figure 8. Preambles of the letter of administration (top) and the bond (bottom).

Transcription of the handwritten text:

(Top) ... John Bailey of the City of New York Cutler a Creditor of Walter Mould late an Inhabitant (*sic*) of Kentuckie (*sic*) Merchant deceased ...

(Bottom) ... John Bailey of the City of New York Cutler Samuel Loundon of the same place Printer and Henry Will of the same place Pewterer ...

It was alleged that Walter Mould had died intestate, or without a will. The remainder of his estate in New York City was administered by his creditor John Bailey. Probate records, a letter of administration and £400 bond, dated February 1, 1790, named Bailey as “administrator of all and singular the Goods, Chattels, and Credits which were of the said Walter Mould.” Bailey was to produce an inventory and present it to the probate court within six months. Figure 8 shows the preambles of the letter and bond.²⁴ The Appendix illustrates full copies of these documents.

24. New York, Wills and Probate Records, Queens, Letters, 1787–1799 and Queens, Bonds 1787–1791.

In summary, the following new information concerning Walter Mould has been presented:

1. The man arrested in Bristol, England on February 10, 1776, was Walter Mould, the same person who later coined New Jersey coppers. The newspaper report of his arrest in 1776 gives some insight into his character. He was not a man of means, but he would play the part if it was to his benefit.

2. When Walter immigrated to America, he had a wife, Martha, and children in England. It has not been determined if he left both his wife and children or if his wife had died and he left just the children.²⁵

3. In 1786, the New York City directory did not list an occupation for Walter at his 23 William Street address, but a newspaper ad establishes that he was doing business as a merchant at this address.

4. When the New Jersey coinage grant was made public, someone in the New York City area requested that the decade old English news report of Walter's arrest for counterfeiting be re-published in a local newspaper. Evidently this resulted in the breakup of Walter's partnership with Goadsby and Cox.

5. After obtaining the New Jersey coinage grant and moving back to the state, Walter attempted to settle his financial affairs within the city by first hiring

25. There are three death reports for a Martha Mould who could have been Walter's wife in England. Unfortunately, none of the reports identify a relative and only two of the reports give an age at death. Walter's wife was born circa 1744. The burial date, location, and age at death are presented below:

- January 28, 1781; Brackley, Northamptonshire; no age given.
- June 6, 1810; Fisherton Delamere, Wiltshire; 67.
- April 28, 1816; Tutbury, Staffordshire; 72.

If the first death was Walter's wife, then this could be one of the reasons he came to America. The other two deaths are the correct age for Walter's wife which would mean he left both his wife and children when he immigrated to America.

Possible children of Walter and Martha Mould:

- Henry Dixon Mould; christened December 28, 1765, at Saint Katherine Coleman, London.

If this was their son, Martha was pregnant at the time she married Walter. The Christian name of Henry Dixon indicates he was a poor boy. On November 9, 1693, Henry Dixon set up a trust for poor male children to entice them to go into the trades. If you named your son with his Christian and surname the trust gave you £5. When the boy completed his apprenticeship he would receive another £5. (Search Henry Dixon's Charities.)

- Mary Mould; born June 18, 1768, Holborn, Middlesex.
- Ann Mould; born 1773.
- William Mould; born November 12, 1774; died in the workhouse on February 16, 1777.
- Sophia Mould; born in the workhouse on March 8, 1777.

an attorney and a year later creating power of attorneys to do the same. Importantly, the initial power of attorney shows a credible relationship between Walter and Samuel Atlee's brewery operation.

6. Probate documents filed after Walter's death identify John Bailey as one of his creditors.

In the few years between the end of the American Revolution and the adoption of the Federal Constitution (1783–1790), New York City was a hotbed of interest in the coinage of copper. Research continues to show that the various people sharing in this interest knew and interacted with each other.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Christopher McDowell, John Kleeberg, and Jeff Rock for editing this article and making suggestions for improvement. Also, thanks to Julia Casey for providing the newspaper reports concerning the arrests of the counterfeiting ring in Bristol.

APPENDIX

July 7, 1787, Power of Attorney

Recorded for and at the request of Mr.

William Alexander this 13th Day of July 1787 ~

Know all men by these presents that I Walter Mould of Morris Town in the County of Morris and State of New Jersey, for divers good causes and valuable considerations me hereunto moving, have made ordained constituted and appointed and by these presents Do make ordain constitute and appoint William Alexander of the City of New York Esquire my true and lawful attorney for me and in my name and for my use to ask demand sue for recover and receive of and from all and every person and persons whom it doth shall or may concern all and every sum and sums of money Debts dues demands goods wares or merchandises whatsoever do owing or belonging unto me, and to have use and to take all lawful ways and means for the recovery thereof, and upon receipt thereof acquittances releases or other discharges for me and in my name or otherwise to make seal and deliver and upon non payment or non delivery thereof or any part to sue arrest implead and prosecute for the same or any part thereof by attachment arrest distress or otherwise and generally to do all the lawful acts and things whatsoever for me and in my name as fully in every respect as I myself might or could do or have done were I personally present ratifying and by these

presents allowing and confirming all whatsoever my said attorney shall in my name lawfully do or cause to be done in and about the premises by virtue of these presents. In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this seventh day of July in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven. W. Mould {Seal}. Sealed and delivered in the presence of. Tho^s. Thomas John H. Russell. Be it remembered that on the Tenth Day of July in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven. Personally came and appeared before me James Duane Esquire Mayor of the City of New York Thomas Thomas one of the subscribing witnesses the within written Instrument of writing a power of attorney who being by me sworn on the holy Evangelists of almighty God did depose and say that he was present and did see the within named Walter Mould sign Seal and execute the within Letter of Attorney as and for his voluntary act and Deed to and for the uses and purposes therein mentioned, and that John H. Russell was present at the execution thereof and did sign his name as a Witness of the Execution thereof in his this Deponents presence, and I have examined the same and finding no Erasures or Interlineations, do allow the same to be Recorded. Ja^s. Duane. ~

November 24, 1787 Revocation

Recorded for and at the request of Mr. John Jarvis,

This 7th Day of December 1787.~

To all people to whom these presents shall come, I Walter Mould of Morris County in the State of New Jersey sendeth Greeting, whereas I Walter Mould in and by my Letter of Attorney bearing date the seventh day of July 1787 did make constitute and appoint Mr. William Alexander of the City of New York my attorney for Recovery of all Debts and sums of money due to me the said Walter Mould as by the said Letter of Attorney may appear now know ye, That I the said Walter Mould for divers good causes and Considerations me hereunto moving have revoked Countermanded annul and make void, the said Letter of Attorney and all power and authority thereby given the said William Alexander. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and Seal this Twenty fourth day of November in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven. W. Mould {Seal}. Signed Sealed and delivered in the presence of us. John H. Russell, John Bailey. City of New York ss. Personally appeared before me James M. Hughes Master in Chancery this fifth Day of December in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven, John Bailey of the said City who being duly sworn deposeth and saith that he did see Walter Mould of Morris Town in Morris County in the State of New Jersey acknowledge as his

act and Deed and in due form of Law deliver the within Revocation of a Letter of Attorney and that the same Walter Mould set opposite to the Seal to this Revocation of a Letter of Attorney affixed is of the proper hand writing of him the said Walter Mould and also saith that the names John H. Russel and John Bailey subscribed as witnesses to the due execution of this Revocation of a Letter of Attorney are of the respective proper hand writing of this Deponent and the said John H. Russel Silversmith of Morris Town aforesaid and I having examined the same and finding no material Erasures or Interlineations therein do allow the same ot be Recorded. James M. Hughes Mag. in Can. ~~~

November 24, 1787 Power of Attorney

Recorded for and at the request of Mr. John Jarvis,

This 7th Day of December 1787 ~~~

Know all me by these presents, that I Walter Mould of the County of Morris in the State of New Jersey merchant for divers good causes and considerations hereunto moving, Have made ordained authorized and appointed, and by these presents, do make ordain authorize and appoint John Jarvis of the City of New York and state of New York my true and lawful attorney for me and in my name and to my use to ask demand sue for recover, and receive all such sum and sums of money debts and dues whatsoever, which are now due and owing unto me the said Walter Mould and to have use and take all lawful ways and means in my name of otherwise for recovery thereof by attachment arrest distress or otherwise and to agree and compound for the same, and a quittances of other sufficient discharges for the same for me and in my name to make seal and deliver and to do all other lawful acts and things whatsoever concerning the premises as fully in every respect as I myself might of could so were I personally present, and at his pleasure revoke ratifying and allowing all and whatsoever my said attorney shall layfully do in my name or cause to be done in and about the premises by virtue of these presents. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this Twenty fourth Day of November in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven. W. Mould {Seal} Signed sealed and delivered in the presence of us. John H. Russell, John Bailey. City of New York ss. Personally appeared before me James M. Hughes master in Chancery this fifth Day of December in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven, John Bailey of the said City who being duly sworn deposeth and saith that he did see Walter Mould of Morris Town in Morris County in the State of New Jersey acknowledge as his act and deed and in due form of Law deliver the within Letter of Attorney and that the same Walter Mould set opposite to the seal to this

Letter of Attorney affixed is of the proper hand writing of him the said Walter Mould and saith that the names of John H. Russel and John Bailey subscribed as witnesses to the due Execution of this Letter of Attorney are of the respective proper hand, writing of this Deponent and the said John H. Russel Silversmith of Morris Town aforesaid and I having inspected the same and finding no material Erasures or Interlineations therein do allow the same to be Recorded. James M. Hughes Mag. in Can. ~~~

THE PEOPLE of the STATE
of New-York, by the Grace of God,
FREE and INDEPENDENT.

To *John Bailey of the City of New York* *Attorney*
Administrator of Walter Mould late an Inhabitant of
Kentucky Merchant deceased ————— Send Greeting.

WHEREAS *the said Walter Mould* —————
as is alleged, lately died
intestate, out of this State,

having whilst living, and at the time of *his* Death, Goods, Chattels, or Credits within this State, by Means whereof, the ordering and granting Administration of all and singular the said Goods, Chattels, and Credits; and also the auditing, allowing and final discharging the Account thereof doth appertain unto our Judge of our Court of Probates, and we being desirous that the Goods, Chattels, and Credits of the said Deceased may be well and faithfully administered, applied and disposed of, do grant unto you the said

John Bailey —————
full power by these presents to administer, and faithfully dispose of all and singular the said Goods, Chattels, and Credits, to ask, demand, recover and receive the Debts, which unto the said Deceased, whilst living, and at the time of *his* Death, did belong, and to pay the Debts which the said Deceased did owe, so far as such Goods, Chattels, and Credits will thereunto extend, and the Law require: Hereby requiring you to make, or cause to be made, a true and perfect inventory of all and singular the Goods, Chattels, and Credits of the said Deceased, which have, or shall come to your Hands, Possession or Knowledge, or unto the Hands or Possession of any other person or persons for you, and the same so made to exhibit, or cause to be exhibited into the Registry of our Court of Probates, at or before the Expiration of six Calendar Months from the Date hereof; and also to render a just and true Account of Administration when thereunto required: And we do by these presents, depute, constitute, and appoint you the said *John Bailey* —————

Administrator of all and singular the Goods, Chattels, and Credits, which were of the said *Walter Mould* —————

IN TESTIMONY whereof, we have caused the Seal of Office of our said Judge to be hereunto affixed,
WITNESS Peter Ogilvie, Esquire, Judge of our said Court, at the City of New-York, the *first* ———
Day of *February* in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and *Ninety* ———
and in the *Twentieth* Year of our Independence.

Wm Ogilvie Clerk

Appendix Figure 1. Probate Letter of Administration.

KNOW all MEN by these Presents, That We *John Bailey of the City of New York* *Samuel Loudon of the same place* *printer* and *Henry Will of the same place* *Printer*

are held and firmly bound unto the People of the State of New-York, in the Sum of *four hundred* *Shounds*

Current Money of the said State; to be paid to the said People, to which Payment well and truly to be made, we do bind ourselves, and each of us, our and each of our Heirs, Executors and Administrators, jointly and severally, firmly by these Presents, sealed with our Seals, dated the *first* Day of *February* in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and *Ninety* and in the *fourteenth* Year of our Independence

THE Condition of this Obligation is such, That if the above bounden *John Bailey* Administrator of all and singular the Goods, Chattels and Credits of *Walter Moulton late an Inhabitant of Kentucky Merchant* Deceased, do make, or cause to be made, a true and perfect Inventory of all and singular the Goods, Chattels and Credits of the said Deceased, which have or shall come to the Hands, Possession or Knowledge of the said *John Bailey* or into the Hands or Possession of any other Person or Persons, for the said *John Bailey* and the same so made, do exhibit, or cause to be exhibited into the Registry of the Court of Probates of this State, at or before the Expiration of six Calendar Months from the Date of the above-written Obligation, and the same Goods, Chattels and Credits, and all other Goods, Chattels and Credits of the said Deceased, at the Time of *his* Death, which, at any Time after shall come to the Hands or Possession of the said *John Bailey* or into the Hands or Possession of any other Person or Persons, for the said *John Bailey* do well and truly administer according to Law:

And further, when thereunto lawfully required, do make, or cause to be made, a just and true Account of Administration; and all the Rest and Residue of the said Goods, Chattels and Credits which shall be found remaining upon the said Administrator's Account, the same being first examined and allowed of by the Judge of the Court of Probates of this State, for the time being, shall deliver and pay unto such Person or Persons respectively, as the said Judge, by his Decree or Sentence, shall, pursuant to the true Intent and Meaning of the Act, entitled, "An Act for settling Intestates Estates, proving Wills, and granting Administrations," limit and appoint; and if it shall hereafter appear, that any Last Will and Testament was made by the said Deceased, and the Executor or Executors, therein named, or any other person or persons do exhibit the same, and request to have it allowed and approved, then if the said *John Bailey* being thereunto required, do render and deliver the Letters of Administration, granted on the Estate of the said Deceased, to the Office from which the same were issued, then this Obligation to be void and of none Effect, or else to remain in full Force and Virtue.

Sealed and Delivered }
in the Presence of }
Wm Ogilvie
John Bailey
Henry Will
Sam Loudon

Appendix Figure 2. Probate Bond.

The People vs. Counterfeit Coppers

GARY A. TRUDGEN (VESTAL, NEW YORK)

In 1753 the New York Legislature passed a law intended to combat the importing and passing of counterfeit British coppers. It was in response to a coppers crisis within the city that caused frenzied rioting, mass confusion, and heated controversy.¹ The Act was passed while New York was still a British colony, but even after independence this law was still being enforced. The Act itemized the following provisions: 1) a fine of £100 for importing counterfeit British halfpence and farthings; 2) a fine of 10 times the amount of counterfeit money passed; 3) if a person knowingly kept counterfeits in his possession for 10 days, it was equivalent to importing them; 4) seized counterfeits were to be melted down and the proceeds given to the poor.

On Thursday, February 9, 1786, the Court of General Quarter Sessions located at City Hall in New York City recorded the following indictment:

The People of the State of New York

vs.

Counterfeit Coppers seized in the possession of Andrew Mitchell

Whereas by a record filed in this Court on the eighth instant under the hand of John Broome Esquire one of the Aldermen of the said City It ap-

1. Gary A. Trudgen, "The 1753 Coppers Crisis in New York," Bowers and Merena, *Rare Coin Review* No. 85, p. 77.

pears that a Quantity of British half pence amounting to about twenty five pounds lawful money of New York in pursuance of a Law of the State entitled "An Act to prevent the importing or passing counterfeits of British half pence and farthings" passed the 12th December 1753 were seized by Abraham Van Gelder one of the Constables of the said City from Andrew Mitchell of the said City, Merchant and brought before the said Alderman on suspicion of their being Counterfeit; That on application of the said Andrew Mitchell he the said Alderman caused Charles McEvers and Alexander Robertson two sufficient Freeholders to be summoned and to each of them administered an Oath summarily to determine the quality of the aforesaid coppers who upon their Oath certified the same to be of a good quality, but that they were about twenty five per cent deficient in weight; which deficiency also appeared to the said Alderman and the said Alderman having caused the said Counterfeit Coppers to be delivered here in Court with the record aforeward It is therefore ordered that the said Coppers shall be melted down under the direction of the Sheriff of the said City and County and when so melted down shall be sold and disposed of by him to the best advantage and that the money to arise from such Sale / after all charge respecting the said melting and sale shall be paid / shall be delivered unto the Chamberlain of the City as receiver of the Mayor Aldermen and Commonalty, the overseers of the Poor thereof, for the use and benefit of the Poor of the same City~

John Broome (Fig. 1), the alderman who reported the seizure of the coppers to the court, was the brother of Connecticut coiner Samuel Broome.² At this time, Broome was also president of the New York City Chamber of Commerce. At the beginning of the year, on January 3, 1786, the Chamber had made a motion and resolution to publish the 1753 law and to "use every exertion in their power to carry the same into full and compleat (*sic*) effect. The resolution was published in the local newspapers (Fig. 2).³ It appears the Chamber was anxious to make an example out of someone as evidenced by the subject indictment.

The indictment stated that the suspect coppers had been found in the possession of Andrew Mitchell, a merchant located at 236 Queen Street, by the East Ward constable Abraham Van Gelder. The amount of coppers was substantial. With a value of about £25 in New York money of account, the total quantity

2. John Broome was a merchant and politician. He served as New York City alderman from 1783 through 1786, president of the New York City Chamber of Commerce from 1785 to 1794, and lieutenant governor for the State of New York from 1804 to 1810.

3. *Daily Advertiser*, January 10, 1786.



Figure 1. John Broome (1738–1810).

N E W - Y O R K .
 TUESDAY, Jan. 10.
 CHAMBER of COMMERCE.

January 3, 1786.
 On motion and seconded.

THAT the chamber take into consideration the disadvantages which arise from the great quantities of counterfeit coppers, which daily flow into this city from Europe and the neighbouring states, and that they devise some means to prevent the evil.

Resolved, That the president do cause the laws respecting counterfeit copper coin to be published: and that this chamber will use every exertion in their power to carry the same into full and compleat effect; and that it be recommended to the citizens at large to join them in this so necessary a measure. *By order of the chamber,*

Attest. JOHN BROOME,
Adam Gilchrist, jun. President.
 Secretary.

Figure 2. Chamber of Commerce Notice.

of coppers was around 7,000.⁴ When Mitchell questioned Broome concerning why the coppers were taken, two men were summoned to evaluate the seized coppers. They were Charles McEvers, an insurance broker located at 194 Water Street, and Alexander Robertson, a merchant at 12 Hanover Square. They found the coppers to be of good quality, that is well-made with good copper, but they were underweight by as much as 25%. The weight of regal halfpence was set at 46 per avoirdupois pound or 152.2 grains per coin. Thus, the seized coppers weighted about 114 grains each resulting in a total weight of 798,000 grains or 114 avoirdupois pounds.⁵ This amounts to a keg over half-filled with counterfeit coppers.⁶ Broome, who agreed with the conclusion of the two men who evaluated the coppers, ordered that the coppers be delivered to the court. Then, as specified by the 1753 law, the sheriff was to take the coppers, have them melted and sold to benefit the poor. It is almost certain that Mitchell had purchased the coppers at a great discount for use in his business. Curiously, the court is mute as to Mitchell's punishment. If they followed the letter of the law he would have been fined £100, a very significant amount. Whatever the outcome, Mitchell stayed in business at the Queen Street address as reported in the 1789 New York City Directory.

The sheriff of the City and County of New York at this time was Marinus Willett, a hero of the Revolutionary War. Willett was a no-nonsense guy who got things done, serving as sheriff for a total of nine years.⁷ Without question, he did his duty and had the coppers melted and sold for the benefit of the city's poor. The price of copper in New York at this time was 20d per avoirdupois pound.⁸ Thus, the copper value of the melted halfpence would have been £8.2.7.⁹ It is unknown what Willett paid to have the coppers melted and sold, but if he was

4. At this time, coppers were accepted at 14 to a shilling in New York. Since there are 20 shillings in a monetary pound, the total number of coppers calculates out at $14 \times 20 \times 25 = 7000$.

5. Weight of each coin is $152.2 \text{ grains} \times .75 = 114 \text{ grains}$. The total weight of the coins would be $7,000 \text{ coins} \times 114 \text{ grains} = 798,000 \text{ grains}$. There are 7,000 grains per pound, thus the weight in avoirdupois pounds is $798,000 \div 7,000 = 114 \text{ pounds}$.

6. A full keg of Fugio coppers weighed an average of 200 pounds. See *The Colonial Newsletter*, April 2017, "Transcript of the 1788 Connecticut and Federal Mint Account Book," p. 4542.

7. Marinus Willett served as sheriff from 1784 to 1787 and again from 1791 to 1795. He also served as Mayor of New York City from 1807 to 1808. Interestingly, on October 26, 1785, he filed a memorial on copper coinage with the Continental Congress which was referred to the Board of Treasury. Currently the specifics of the memorial are unknown.

8. Mossman, Philip, *Money of the American Colonies and Confederation*, ANS Numismatic Studies No. 20, 1993, p. 226.

9. The value of the melted coins equates to $114 \text{ lbs.} \times 20\text{d} = 2,280\text{d}$ or £8.2.7 in New York money of account.

TO BE SOLD,
By **ANDREW MITCHELL,**
In *Queen-street, No. 228, corner of King-street*

D ouble refined loaf	Nutmags
Sugar	Jamaica spirits
Single refined ditto	Rum
Fine hyson	Brandy
Green	Cherry brandy
Souchong	Shrub
Congo and	White wine vinegar
Robea	Queen's ware
Madeira and	and wine glasses
Port wines	Raptee and Scotch snuff
London porter	Roll and tea cut tobacco
Coffee	Pepper
Chocolate	Mustard
Brown sugar	Currants
Cassia soap	Tobacco powder
Florence oil	and heart brushes
Mac	and dipped candles
Cloves	Corks, &c. &c. &c.
Cinnamon	

Figure 3. Andrew Mitchell ad in the *Royal American Gazette*, September 29, 1778.

careful the poor of the city would have received upwards of £8 for their needs. It is not known how the money was used, but it was probably for basic needs such as shelter, clothing, and food. If it was food, at this time, a chicken could be purchased for 1 shilling or a bushel of corn for 3 shillings.¹⁰ Therefore, £8 would have purchased 160 chickens or 53 bushels of corn for the poor.

The sheriff may have sold the melted coppers to Thomas Thomas, a coppersmith located at No. 206 Queen Street in the city. At this time Thomas was advertising that he would pay the highest price for old copper (Fig. 3).¹¹ In 1784, Thomas, along with Samuel Atlee, petitioned the New York Legislature for citizenship in the state. Later, in 1785, Thomas acted as sales agent for Samuel Atlee's porter brewery. At first this seems strange that a coppersmith would take orders for beer, but the brewery, which was damaged during the Revolutionary War, was in need of the services of a coppersmith in the repair of the brew house copper equipment. Therefore, perhaps with the assistance of Thomas, in an unusual twist of fate the melted coppers made their way back to the brewery.

Andrew Mitchell was born on March 16, 1753, in Wigton, Galloway, Scotland, and immigrated to New York City where he sold alcoholic beverages and

10. The purchase prices were gleaned from the Leavenworth account book for early 1787 in New Haven, Connecticut. See *The Colonial Newsletter*, August 2017, p. 4624.

11. *Independent Journal*, May 26, 1787.



Figure 4. Typical Group 1 Atlee Halfpenny. Vlack 7-74A (enlarged).

fine groceries at his store in Queen Street.¹² While the British were still occupying the city, Andrew married Margaret Stites on July 18, 1781.¹³ She was the daughter of John Stites, a hardware merchant and physician located at 178 Queen Street.¹⁴ In late 1784 Robert “Bob” Birch was working out of Andrew’s father-in-law’s store. Birch was a skilled artisan who is now believed to be the die engraver of many New Jersey coppers and the famed 1792 Birch cent.¹⁵ As shown by the minutes of the New York City Mayor’s Court, Birch had dealings

12. Andrew Mitchell was a member of the New York City branch of the St. Andrew’s Society, a Scottish heritage organization. Also, he was a founding member of the Tontine Coffee House, which was established in 1793 at the corner of Wall and Water Streets in the city. It served as a meeting place for trade and correspondence.

13. Margaret was born on March 2, 1766, and died August 13, 1834. She was only 15 years old when she married Andrew while he was 28, almost twice her age. They had 13 children, but not all lived to become adults. He died in the city on May 28, 1836, aged 83 years.

14. A November 25, 1784, ad placed in the *New York Packet* shows the type of merchandise that he was selling:

“JOHN STITES, at his store, No. 178, Queen Street, and No. 23 and 27, William Street, Hath received by the last vessels from England, a great variety of Birmingham and Sheffield goods, from the manufacturers, (with whom he has formed such connections, as to enable him to sell at their prices) viz. Jewellery, plated and japanned goods, brass and saddlers furniture, carpenters, masons, shoemakers, and blacksmiths tools fowling pieces, pocket and horse pistols, (*obliterated*)... mounted, a few sets of plated, coach, phaeton, and chaise harness, elastic and pistol saddles, &c, and assortment of ironmongery and cutlery, London pewter, copper tea kettles, &c. likewise an assortment of dry goods as usual. He has to dispose of a quantity of large oak and pine square timber, fit for shipping.”

15. Christopher McDowell, “James F. Atlee, Albion Cox, Bob Birch and the 1792 Birch Cent,” *The Colonial Newsletter* November 2016.

with Albion Cox, who was also living in Queen Street in 1786. During this period, it is believed that Cox, along with Walter Mould and James F. Atlee, were involved in a clandestine mint operation at Samuel Atlee's porter brewery. When considering these intertwined personal connections, it becomes feasible that the counterfeit coppers found in Andrew's possession were struck just across town at the brewery located in the West Ward, just north of the city along the Greenwich Road.¹⁶

The weight of the confiscated coppers, at 114 grains each, reinforces the conclusion that they may have come from Atlee's brewery. Group 1 Atlee halfpence, which are believed to have been produced at the brewery, are exactly within this weight range as shown by the metrological data recorded by John Howes (Fig. 4).¹⁷

Andrew Mitchell is not found involved in litigation with the people known to have been associated with the various coinage operations during the Confederation.¹⁸ However, his father-in-law, John Stites,¹⁹ was associated with Walter Mould as revealed by litigation within the New York Supreme Court where they sued each other in the spring of 1786. Andrew and John may not have been actively involved with the coinage of counterfeit coppers, but undoubtedly they were aware of this activity because of their association with Bob Birch and Walter Mould. Therefore, Andrew Mitchell was in all probability just a customer when he purchased the half-keg of counterfeit coppers. Since no further action was taken against Mitchell by the court, it appears he was not fined for possessing the coppers, as specified by the 1753 law, and his only punishment was the loss of the coppers. He continued in business within the city for the remainder of his life.

The subject indictment brought against counterfeit coppers was the only one recorded between the years 1786 and 1790. Even though the local newspa-

16. Queen Street ran parallel to the west bank of the East River while Atlee's Brewery was on the east bank of the North River, also known as the Hudson River. Diagonally, Mitchell's store was about one mile southeast of the brewery.

17. John Howes, *Contemporary Counterfeit Halfpenny & Farthing Families*, p. 168, Colonial Coin Collectors Club, 2018. A total of 220 Group 1 halfpence averaged 114.6 grains.

18. The following New York City courts were checked: Mayor's Court, Court of General Quarter Sessions, Special Court of General Sessions, and New York Supreme Court.

19. Andrew's father-in-law, Dr. John Stites, Jr., was born in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, on April 25, 1743. At the age of 20 he moved to New York City where he was both a merchant and practicing physician. He married Susannah Brasher on January 16, 1764. Susannah was the cousin of Ephraim Brasher, Jr., the goldsmith of Brasher doubloon fame. During the Revolutionary War he supported the British cause but attempted to stay neutral. Later in life he moved to Kentucky where he died on January 12, 1812. The preceding biographical information was gleaned from <http://simonpg.com/d61.htm>.

pers were warning the public about counterfeit coins, a single case during this period suggests the city authorities did not aggressively fight the influx of bad coppers.²⁰ Perhaps a public outcry against the confiscation of coppers stymied the officials from taking further action. Not all were pleased with the Chamber's resolution. A little over a week after the publication of the resolution, an individual using the penname "Sterling" published a diatribe against the resolution.²¹ In Summary, Sterling stated that the 1753 law was outdated and the resolution would devastate the city's poor because as little as one in a thousand coppers in use were genuine. He said that the people needed these coppers, even though they were counterfeit, to conduct their daily business. Also, he claimed that the counterfeit coppers were coming from England, Ireland, and the United States, confirming that some were being produced locally. He went on to suggest that instead of culling counterfeit coppers from circulation they should devalue them to pass at 24 to the shilling or treat them as farthings if they were at least half the weight of a regal halfpenny. In line with Sterling's proposal, a little over a year later, action was taken on April 20, 1787, by the New York Legislature when they lowered the value of coppers from 14 to 20 per shilling in "An Act to regulate the Circulation of Copper Coin."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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20. *Independent Journal or, The General Advertiser*, April 23, 1785. *New York Daily Advertiser*, January 2, 1786.

21. *Daily Advertiser*, January 19, 1786.

Samuel Atlee's New York City Brewery and Mint

GARY A. TRUDGEN (VESTAL, NEW YORK)

Most everyone with an interest in the coinages of early America has heard of Machin's Mills, a secretive mint located near Newburgh, New York, along the eastern outlet of Orange Lake on land owned by Governor George Clinton. The mint was located in the mills of Thomas Machin, the man who was in charge of military defenses along the Hudson River during the Revolutionary War. Interestingly, the mint at Machin's Mills owes its existence to an English brewer and his son, Samuel and James F. Atlee. In this article, the father's brewery operation in New York City is discussed in detail and his son's involvement in the post-war copper coinages is scrutinized.

Samuel Atlee was born in 1737 in the town of Taunton, Somerset County, England. He was the second son of John and Sarah Atlee. After a failed business and marriage, 46-year-old Samuel immigrated to America,¹ arriving in New York City on November 2, 1783.² In his own words, Samuel says that "from his youth [he] carried on the art or trade of a grain Distiller and brewer in England, the place of his nativity, in all its various branches distilling from wheat, rye, Oats, Buckwheat, etc. Porter, strong beer, brauen staut, pale ale, and table beers, as well as rectifying raw spirits into Brandies Gineva [all] kinds of Cordials

1. Gary A. Trudgen, "Samuel and James F. Atlee: Machin's Mills Partners," *The Colonial Newsletter*, October 1992, pp. 1318–19.

2. Samuel gave this date in his petition to the New York State Assembly when he requested citizenship within the state.

[Batifer], Shrub, etc.” He further states that he came to America because he was “influenced by the pleasing prospects which presented [themselves] to his view in America, at the close of the late war, the blessings of a free Government; the prospects of advantage to himself & to the United States by establishing the same business in America which he had long followed with success in England.”³

Samuel’s second son, James Falconer Atlee, was an overachiever. Arriving in America in 1784 at the age of 22, he worked with his father until he returned to his homeland in 1794. His decade of experiences in America matured and firmed his resolve to succeed. Back in England he prospered, settling near his brother John in the London area where he became a very successful distiller. His social status rose until he was a member of the English gentry. In the autumn years of his life he retired from business and lived the life of a gentleman. With time on his hands he turned his thoughts towards technological improvement, obtaining three patents in the marine industry.⁴ On October 26, 1825, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Register of the Arts and Sciences* concerning his patent on condensing wood.⁵ The letter shows that he was intelligent, technically minded, knowledgeable, and well spoken.

When James’ father, Samuel, stepped off the ship onto the streets of the New York City, the British Army was preparing to evacuate along with thousands of Loyalists. The historic day arrived on Tuesday, November 25, 1783. Samuel must have witnessed these stirring events which are now remembered as Evacuation Day. The city itself, however, suffered widespread damage during the war. Nearly a quarter of the settled portion of the city was in utter ruin as a result of two fires, one in 1776 and another in 1778. The British Army made no effort to rebuild the fire-damaged sections of the city, plus now there were a multitude of useless military defenses. Everywhere one looked there was ruin and devastation.⁶

Before embarking on the ship for America, it is likely that Samuel corresponded with someone in New York City who encouraged him to immigrate. His rapid acclimatization into his adopted country supports this conjecture. In 1782, while still in England, Samuel became friends with Joseph Willis. When considering Samuel’s apparent rush to remarry, this time in New York City to

3. Trudgen, “Petition to the Vermont General Assembly for an Act of Insolvency,” filed October 13, 1792, p. 1348.

4. The patents were: “A Process for Condensing Wood,” (1825); “Construction of Made Masts,” (1827), Charles Augustus Ferguson was a co-inventor; and “Bonds or Hoops for Securing Made and other Masts, Bowsprits, and Yards” (1828).

5. Cowie & Co., London, 1826, Vol. 3, p. 100.

6. Sidney I. Pomerantz, *New York, an American City: 1783-1803*, Columbia University Press, 1938, pp. 19–20.

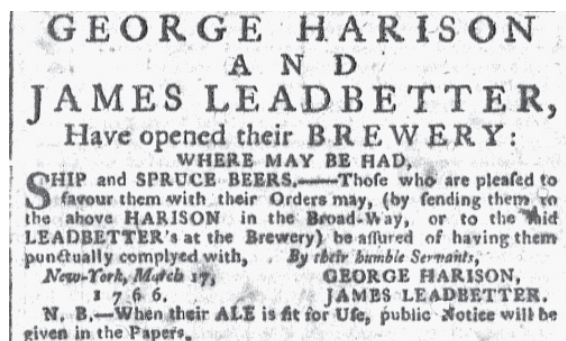


Figure 1. *New York Gazette*, March 31, 1766.

25-year-old Phebe Willis⁷ on February 12, 1784, it is feasible that Samuel had corresponded with Phebe's parents, George and Margaret Willis, who may have been related to his friend back in England. Not long after Phebe married Samuel, her father, George, died, and his will was probated on March 24, 1784.⁸ Before his death, and possibly knowing Samuel's desire to find employment as a brewmaster, George Willis may have spoken to Richard Harrison who had inherited a large brewery from his father, George Harrison, located in the West Ward on the outskirts of the city. As a successful attorney, Richard had no personal interest in operating the brewery, and it stood idle since 1773. Before the brewery could reopen, however, it was in need of extensive repairs and a new brewmaster.

HARRISON'S BREWERY

The brewery was built on a large tract of land that had been leased from the Church of England (Trinity Church) on October 30, 1765, for a period of 99 years. George Harrison,⁹ along with Richard Nicholls, Harrison's father-in-law, and James Leadbetter, a brewmaster, had joined together to have the brewery erected. The brewery was situated on an outcrop of land along the eastern bank of the Hudson River and bounded by Greenwich Road to its east. The brewery opened its doors for business on Monday, March 17, 1766, advertising that they had ship and spruce beer¹⁰ for sale (Fig. 1). Their ale became available in July. It

7. Phebe was born on August 10, 1759, and christened in Trinity Church Parish on August 19, 1759.

8. New York County Wills and Probate 1658–1880, Liber 36, p. 339.

9. The Harrison surname is found spelled with one or two "R"s. I am using the modernized spelling of Harrison throughout this article.

10. Spruce beer was flavored with the essence of spruce trees and is a natural source of vitamin C used to ward off scurvy during long sea voyages.

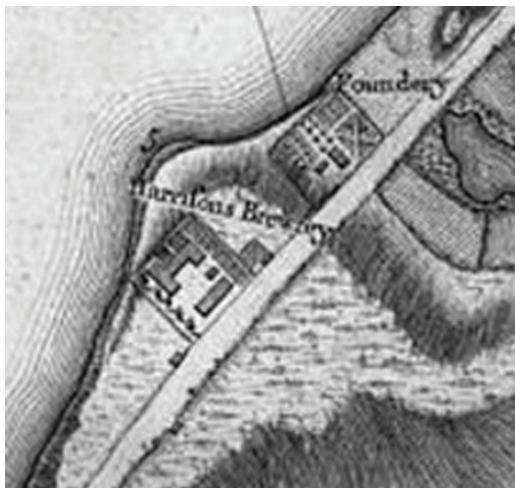


Figure 2. Harrison's Brewery as depicted by the 1766 map.

was one of the largest industrial complexes in the Colonies, and beer specialists estimate that it may have been capable of producing upwards of 300 barrels of beer a week.¹¹

George Harrison was the son of Francis Harrison, an Oxford-trained lawyer who immigrated to America in 1708. Francis speculated in real estate, buying large tracts of land within New York State. When he passed away in 1740, his son George inherited the land which he gradually sold to support his family and business ventures. George married Jane Nicholls, a direct descendent of Sir Richard Nicholls, the man who named New York after his commander-in-chief, The Duke of York. Richard Harrison, the man who owned the brewery when Samuel Atlee arrived, was the son of George and Jane and had been born on January 23, 1748. Richard's father, George, passed away on April 18, 1773, and the brewery had lain idle since his death.

Just prior to the start of the Revolutionary War, Richard Harrison attempted to sell the brewery.¹² In his for-sale ad he claimed that "The Brewery may vie with any in America, either for Convenience or Pleasantness of Situation." The brewery was located on 26 lots of land which sat on a plateau. Each lot was 100 × 25 feet for a total of 65,000 square feet or about 1.5 acres. Harrison went on to say that "There is a large garden inclosed (*sic*) with a Pale Fence, and many young Fruit Trees, of the best Kinds on the Premises." Furthermore, he said that

11. A beer barrel holds 31 U.S. gallons.

12. *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, January 5, 1775. See the Appendix for a complete copy of the ad.

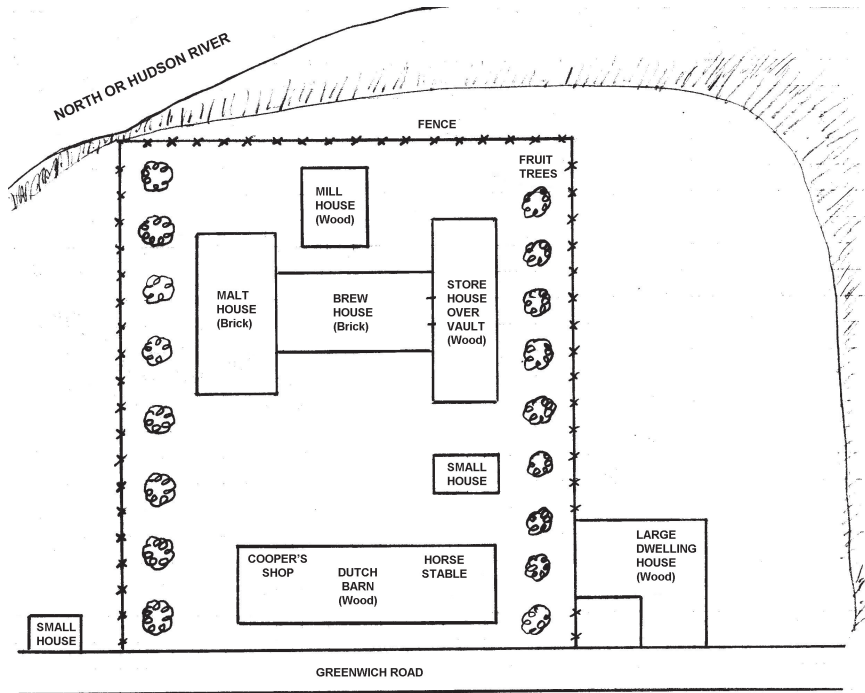


Figure 3. Aerial view of Harrison's Brewery as it appeared in 1766, drawn to scale.

the works were within a short distance of the river, and large boats could easily unload supplies for use at the brewery.

A 1766 map of the city by cartographers John Montrésor and Peter Andrews depicted the brewery, providing a footprint view of the various buildings. Figure 2 shows a portion of the map including the brewery, along with the New York Air Furnace, a foundry built by Peter T. Curtenius and Richard Sharpe, to its north. In 1769 master brewer James Leadbetter attempted to sell his share of the brewery.¹³ In his newspaper notice he provides dimensions of the brewery buildings. When these two primary sources are combined with Harrison's 1775 advertisement, an image of the brewery develops (Fig. 3).

The brewery structures were as follows:

1. Malt House: 60 × 31 feet, brick, 4 stories. It contained two 20 ft² kilns and two lead cisterns. The malt house was used to convert grain into malt by soaking it in water in the cisterns and then drying it in the kilns.

13. New York Journal, October 12, 1769. See the Appendix for a complete copy of the ad.

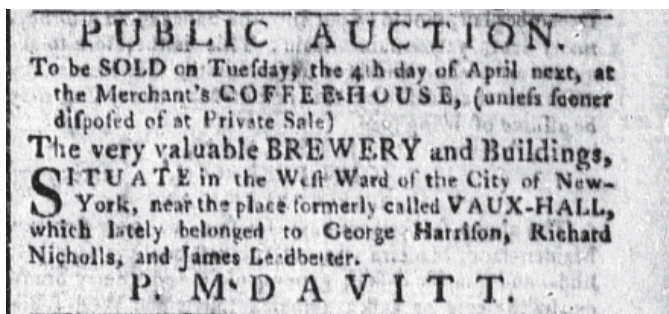


Figure 4. *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, April 3, 1775.

2. Brew House: 60 × 30 feet, brick. It contained two copper kettles and coolers, one very large (50 barrels) and the other smaller (15 barrels). Crushed malt, water, and hops are mixed in one kettle and then transferred to the other kettle and boiled, cooled and yeast added for fermentation.

3. Mill House: 30 × 25 feet, wood. It contained a horse mill and a sizeable pair of iron rollers for grinding malt and pumping water.

4. Vault and Store House: 70 × 23 feet, wood. The vault was attached to the brew house with internal access to it. The 2-story storehouse was erected over the vault, and the whole structure could contain large quantities of liquor, hops, grain, barrels, etc.

5. Dutch Barn: Very large, wood. It contained a cooper's shop and horse stables.

6. Dwelling House: Two stories, large attic, wood. There were five rooms on each floor with two cellars, each containing kitchens.

7. Small Houses: Wood. There were two small houses for servants.

WAR COMES TO THE BREWERY

The brewery was put up for public auction on April 4, 1775, but with war on the horizon it was not sold (Fig. 4). Just two weeks later hostilities began on April 19 with the battles of Lexington and Concord. As word spread about the fighting, Americans laid siege to the British Army in Boston. Shortly before the British Army evacuated Boston, Commander-in-Chief George Washington sent General Charles Lee to New York City to oversee the construction of defenses for the city. Before his arrival on February 4, 1776, the grenadier company commanded by Captain Abraham Van Dyck had already started the construction of a circular battery on the brewery grounds. The battery, which was completed in late April, was located on the bluff in the rear of the dwelling house and it enclosed two



Figure 5. 1782 British headquarters map showing the fortifications around Harrison's Brewery.

12-pounders and two mortars. Figure 5 depicts the battery as shown by a 1782 British Army map of the city defenses.¹⁴

As the American Army moved into the city, many residents moved out into the surrounding country. Richard Harrison was among the outflow of people. The American Army used the brewery as a guard post. Later, on May 17, 1787, Harrison wrote, "Before I left town in the year 1776 the Brewery was taken Possession of as a Guard House by a Detachment of the Continental Army—the Cellars were then broken open & the liquor to a very considerable amount drank out or Wasted."¹⁵

Lieutenant Isaac Bangs of the Continental Army was stationed at the brewery and recorded a contemporary account in his journal for April 26, 1776: "I mounted guard with Capt. Crocker at Harrisons' Brewery. Here is a beautiful circular Fort, built wholly at the Expense & Labour (*sic*) of a company of Grenadiers belonging to the city, for which they received the General thanks publicly. (*sic*) I had a very pleasant Guard; treated very handsomely by Mr. McPherlin & Love & their Wives, who live in the House where the Officers Room was. They invited us to sup & Breakfast, & every way treated us genteelly & encouraged our Future acquaintance."

14. Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "Facsimile of the unpublished British head quarters coloured manuscript map of New York & environs" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed August 23, 2018. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/66592122-d4c5-198f-e040-e00a18066fc1>.

15. Quoted from a letter by Richard Harrison to Mayor James Duane where he requested an abatement of the rent from the vestry of the Church of England. New-York Historical Society, *James Duane Papers*, May 17, 1787.

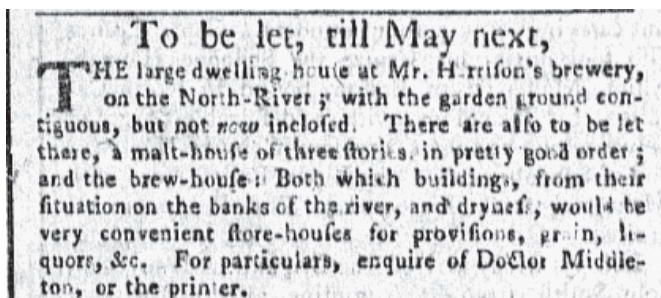


Figure 6. *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, October 13, 1777.

The British Army took control of the city in September 1776 and held it for the next seven years. During the British occupation the brewery was devastated. In his letter to James Duane, Harrison explains: “Upon the Arrival of the British Army they took Possession of and made it a Hospital for Convalescents—Who totally destroyed the Coolers & other utensils—pulled down the Store House Stable & Barn & cut up the Kettles which they sold by pieces as old copper.” Anything made of wood, including the fruit trees and fences, was broken up and used for heating during the winter months. The large dwelling house was still standing in October 1777 as shown by the ad in Figure 6, but the malt house lost its top floor. Possibly, Richard Harrison was planning to move back into the city and occupy the house sometime after May 1778. As it turned out, he didn’t return until 1779. By 1789, however, a city map indicates that the large dwelling house had been replaced with a smaller structure.

ATLEE’S BREWERY

In all likelihood Richard Harrison would not have started repairs on the brewery until after the British Army evacuated the city. Furthermore, he needed someone knowledgeable in what repairs were necessary and who could operate the brewery once it reopened. In his 1787 letter to Mayor Duane, he says that “very considerable Expenses have been incurred in making such Repairs as were absolutely necessary.” It is unknown if Harrison footed the entire repair bill or if his new associates kicked in a portion of the cost. The new brewery partners were Samuel Atlee and William Alexander.¹⁶

16. This William Alexander should not be confused with the William Alexander, alias Lord Stirling, of Revolutionary War fame. Lord Stirling died on January 15, 1783.



Figure 7. 1789 map showing the footprint of the brewery buildings.

William Alexander was in his late teens when he emigrated from Ireland.¹⁷ It is not known when he arrived in New York City or how he became acquainted with Samuel Atlee. Once in the country, William was in no hurry to become a citizen since he waited at least two years before he petitioned the New York State Assembly for naturalization on February 27, 1786. Then he waited three more years before he appeared in court in February 1789 to swear allegiance to the state and become a citizen. The 1790 Federal Census shows that William was living in the West Ward of the city now with a wife and one male child. Conceivably during the three-year period he had married an American girl and he now felt it was time to put down roots.

A tremendous amount of work had to be completed before the brewery was operational again. Buildings had to be built plus the malting and brewing equipment had to be repaired or replaced. All of this work was most likely accomplished after Samuel arrived in the city. Obviously, Samuel and William could not have done it by themselves. Many skilled craftsmen, from carpenters to metalworkers, were needed. After the brewery reopened, the people who were taking orders for the brewery may have also been involved in its repair. These people were: Richard Davis, carver and gilder; Robert Neil, carpenter;¹⁸ Philip Lott, auctioneer; and Thomas Thomas, tinman and coppersmith.

A 1789 plan of the city by John McComb and Cornelius Tiebout provides some insight as to how the brewery looked after Samuel Atlee took possession of it (Fig. 7). The barn had been rebuilt and was now tight against Greenwich Road.

17. FamilySearch database, "New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795–1949," GS Film Number 447545.

18. Robert's surname is given as "Niel" in the brewery ads, but this appears to be an error by the printer in setting the type.

New-York, Oct. 9.
 Saturday afternoon one of the Broeklyn Ferry boats, crossing from the city with Mr. Thorn, Mr. Backhouse, and a servant of his Excellency Don Gardoqui, together with five horses, about half way over, by some accident one of the horses fell to leeward, which threw the rest into confusion, and the wind being fresh, the boat overfet with a heavy sea.—On this occasion, the officers and crew of the French Packet acquired much credit, as by their timely exertions no lives were lost.
 Saturday evening a Fire broke out at the Brewery of Mr. Atlee on the North River, which consumed the malt-house. On the alarm the citizens turned out with great alacrity; and many were happily disappointed in finding that by the labour of a few, the brewery was preserv'd before they could be of service. The damage it is said, will not exceed a hundred pounds.

Figure 8. *New York Daily Advertiser*, October 9, 1786.

The store house had been reconstructed and extended from the western wall of the brew house to near the road. The small house that was between the original barn and store house is gone. The malt house is gone; it had burned on October 9, 1786, and was apparently taken down (Fig. 8). The mill house appears to have been moved or rebuilt just south of the brew house and the large dwelling house was apparently restructured and is now much smaller.

The initial advertisement for the resurrected brewery appeared in the local papers dated May 31, 1784 (Fig. 9). Under the firm name of Samuel Atlee, & Co. they informed the public that they were porter brewers and that their "... Porter is entirely made from the produce of this Country, and is presumed to be equal to the London [porter]..." Porter was a bitter, dark, hearty, nutritious brew, made from several kinds of malt and was suited for large-scale production at eighteenth-century standards of control. Almost as soon as the first barrel of porter was ready to wet the lips of their fellow New Yorkers, Samuel and William found themselves involved in litigation within the Mayor's Court of the city. John and Richard Morgan brought lawsuits against them. John was a painter and glazer located at the corner of Gold Street and Maiden Lane, and Richard was his son. In May 1786 John opened a tavern and porter house at the sign of the Free Mason's Arms, 16 Front Street, which was run by his son while he contin-

AMERICAN PORTER.

SAMUEL ATLEE, & Co.
PORTER BREWERS,

At late **HARRISON's** Brewery,
 on the North-River.

BE G leave to inform the Public, that they, in compliance with orders, will send their good draught **PORTER**, to any part of this City, in Casks not less than forty-five Gallons; but the Public may be accommodated with as small a quantity as ten Gallons, they finding their own Casks.

As the Porter is entirely made from the produce of this Country, and is presumed to be equal to the London, this Company flatter themselves they shall meet that encouragement which industrious Manufacturers in America deserve.—YEAST of the first quality for Bakers, to be had every day.

N. B. Orders left at Mr. Richard Davis's Store, No. 16, Peck's Slip; at Mr. Robert Niel's Store, No. 8, Little Dock-Street; at Mr. Lott's Store, No. 6, Old-Slip; or at the *Porter Brewery*, will be punctually attended to.

New-York, 31st May, 1784.

Figure 9. First brewery ad, *Independent Journal*.

ued to carry on his original business.¹⁹ The cases were discontinued, however, as the parties apparently settled their differences out of court. In all likelihood the Morgans had been involved in the repair of the brewery.

In the brewery's next ad, dated November 1, 1784, they reduced their asking price per barrel from £3.4.0 to £2.5.0, a 30% reduction, indicating their sales were not satisfactory. In addition to the price reduction they attempted to play upon the patriotic sympathies of the public by pointing out that the Legislature had placed an import duty on European malt-liquors of one shilling per gallon

19. The preceding information was gleaned from John Morgan's ad in the *Independent Journal*, May 24, 1786.

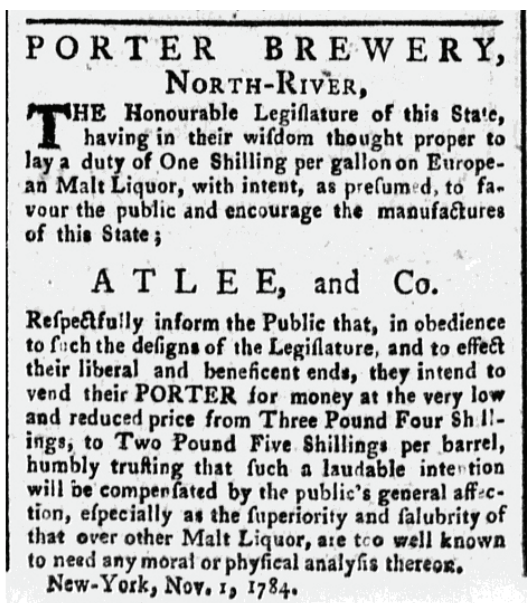


Figure 10. *New-York Morning Post*.

to encourage local manufacturing.²⁰ In an effort to increase sales they introduced a “pale transparent Table Beer” on January 29, 1785, in addition to their porter which was available in draft or bottles (Fig. 10). The table beer was priced very low at sixpence per gallon. Two days later, on January 31, 1785, Samuel and William petitioned the New York State Assembly for tax relief—it was denied. From this time onward, the company did not advertise in the papers. The last known record of them selling beer was to the New York City Common Council on April 30, 1785. The city purchased a barrel of porter for only £1.2.6, a 65% reduction from their original per barrel asking price.²¹

Samuel and William tried their best to succeed at brewing beer but they were not the only New York City businesses to struggle in 1785. Plus, they were competing with at least three other established breweries in the city.²² John Thurman, a merchant in the city, wrote that “many of our new merchants and

20. “An Act imposing Duties on the importation of certain Goods, Wares, Merchandise,” passed in the Assembly on March 15, 1784.

21. Gary A. Trudgen, “Samuel and James F. Atlee: Machin’s Mills Partners,” *The Colonial Newsletter*, October 1992, p. 1323.

22. These breweries were: George Appelby, & Co. located at Catharine Street; Lisenard’s Brewery, located along Greenwich Road just north of Atlee’s brewery; and Medcef Eden at Golden Hill.

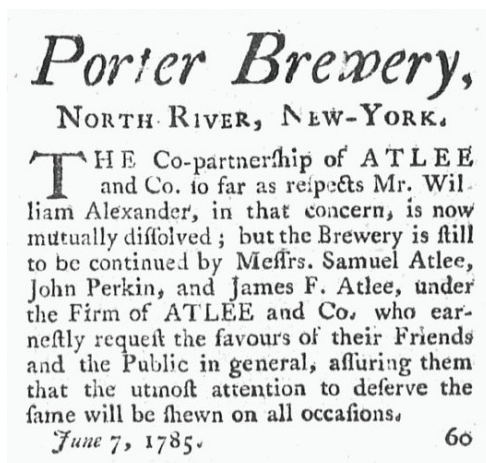


Figure 11. *Independent Journal*, June 11, 1785.

shopkeepers set up since the war have failed. We have nothing but complaints of bad times.”²³ The city was in the grip of a post-war depression.

With the brewery floundering, the two partners looked for other sources of income. On February 25, 1785, Samuel and William advertised “a very convenient dwelling house, outhouses, and a capacious well-built store, with an excellent cellar under the frame, of the full dimensions of the store; and a good garden and yard, lying in Reed-Street, near the hospital in the City, convenient for any manufactory.” Interested parties were instructed to contact either Samuel at the brewery or William at Ranaleigh (*sic*) House.²⁴ The two partners were acting as real estate brokers, a profession that William would embrace and make it his career.²⁵ Thus, on June 7, 1785, William left the brewery to concentrate on real estate and Samuel’s son James, and John Perkin²⁶ became his new partners in the brewery operation (Fig. 11).

William Alexander would stay in the city for the remainder of his life. After getting married, he moved to 27 Great George Street with his wife, Mary. He remained at this address for many years as the city expanded northward. In 1793,

23. Thomas E. V. Smith, *The City of New York in the Year of Washington’s Inauguration 1789*, The Chatham Press, Inc., 1972, p. 5.

24. Reed Street was just south of the brewery, running from Broadway toward the Hudson River, while Ranelagh House was just north of Reed Street and east of the brewery.

25. In my 1992 paper on Samuel and James F. Atlee, I incorrectly stated that William Alexander was an insolvent debtor and that his profession was surveyor.

26. The Perkin surname is often found as Perkins. It is unclear which is correct. I will use Perkin in this article.

Great George Street was absorbed into Broadway and William's address changed to 287 Broadway.

Although Alexander left the brewery in 1785, litigation relating to the business would pester him for years. On November 8, 1785, John Conway sued the brewery partners including William in the Mayor's Court. Their attorney, James Giles, confessed judgement and Conway was awarded £20. Next William sued the three brewery partners in the New York Supreme Court on January 28, 1786. The outcome of this case is unknown. Even after Samuel and son James were no longer operating the brewery and had left the jurisdiction of the Mayor's Court, William sued James, and Samuel sued William on June 24, 1788, tit-for-tat. As a creditor of James, William was attempting to have a specific property of James transferred to him in payment for a debt. The outcome of these actions is unknown.

As early as May 1, 1786, William was lending money for mortgages.²⁷ He studied law and received his license as a real estate attorney and continued to work in this profession as shown by numerous newspaper notices. He was doing well financially, so well that he could afford a maid by 1790 to help his wife at home. William died in the city on August 2, 1825.²⁸

Samuel Atlee did not purchase land in the New York City area. However, on July 23, 1785, he purchased three adjacent plots of land totaling 1,250 acres from John Depuy in Orange County, New York. The land was just south of the town of New Windsor along the southern bank of Murderer's Creek, known today as Moodna Creek. To purchase the land Samuel took out three mortgages, which were financed by William Gilliland, Esquire. Gilliland was a New York City merchant and founder of the town of Willsborough in Washington County, New York, along the western border of Vermont. The three mortgages totaled £1,360, each for a term of 18 years, and a total interest of £68 per year.²⁹

Thomas Machin, Samuel's future business partner, knew the Murderer's Creek area extremely well. During the Revolutionary War he was in charge of defenses on the Hudson River. Machin sank *chevaux-de-frise*³⁰ in the river from near the mouth of Murderer's Creek across to Pollepel Island to impede navigation of the river by large ships. He also constructed a battery of 14 cannon at

27. On this date William loaned James Van Blaracombe and his wife Mary £70 for the purchase of a lot of ground in Pearl Street. *Daily Advertiser*, February 25, 1788.

28. *FamilySearch*, "New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949," film number 447545.

29. Orange County, New York Index to Mortgages 1703-1869, Liber A, pp. 502-04, *FamilySearch* Film number 829317.

30. *Chevaux-de-frise* were log cribs filled with stones and iron tipped spars that were sunk to the bottom of the river. The spars were angled at 45 degrees and long enough so that they were just beneath the surface of the river.

the mouth of the creek to cover the river defense. Later, when he oversaw the placement of a great river chain at West Point, Machin had the chain assembled in sections at Brewster's Forge on the south side of the creek. The sections were then floated down the river to West Point for final assembly.

How did Samuel become aware that this farm land was for sale and why did he purchase it? The farm, which was located about seven miles southeast of Thomas Machin's mills at Orange Lake, included a house, out houses, an orchard, garden, meadows, pastures, and woods. It appears that Samuel had somehow been introduced to Machin, perhaps through their mutual attorney James Giles, and the two men were thinking about going into business together. By this time, Samuel must have known the brewery was doomed and was planning his next business venture.

Shortly after Samuel purchased the farm, Margaret Willis' will was probated on July 27, 1785.³¹ Phebe, Samuel's wife, was one of six daughters and since her father was already deceased the estate was equally divided among the children. The real estate holdings were advertised for sale in the local newspapers on October 13, 1785, by executors Adrian Dow and George Peek. The real estate consisted of three small houses located behind Columbia College on Murray Street and a good brick house at No. 25 Broad Street with a stable in the rear. In all probability, the Broad Street house was Phebe's family home.

John Perkin separately sued Samuel and James Atlee in the January 28, 1786, session of the New York Supreme Court indicating that the newly formed brewery partnership had unraveled. Shortly thereafter, on April 25, Perkin petitioned the New York State Assembly for citizenship within the state and on May 16 he petitioned the Mayor's Court to be declared an insolvent debtor. He had clearly left the brewery. The brewery may have continued operation on a limited scale under the leadership of father and son until the malt house was destroyed by fire on October 9, 1786. After this date it is unlikely that the brewery produced any beer.

ATLEE'S CLANDESTINE MINT

After the war, daily business within the city was conducted with copper coins and barter. About half of the coins in use were British, while the other half was a mish-mash of other types, but many were counterfeit.³² Most of the counterfeits

31. New York County Wills and Probate 1658–1880, Liber 38, p. 135.

32. An individual using the pseudonym Sterling wrote a letter to the Corporation of the City of New York dated January 18, 1786. In the letter he complains about a recent resolution by the Chamber of Commerce and discusses what copper coins were then in use within the city. *Daily Advertiser*, January 19, 1786.

were imported, but some were homegrown as individuals honed their coinage skills in the hope of obtaining a grant from one of the states or federal government. One such person was Walter Mould.

Walter Mould was an Englishman, born on July 20, 1740, at Saint Matthew Parish, in Walsall, Staffordshire on the outskirts of Birmingham. At the age of 36 he was arrested in the city of Bristol on February 10, 1776, for counterfeiting copper halfpence. He was part of a counterfeiting ring that consisted of six people, including his wife Martha.³³ The report stated that Walter was found with "...a great quantity of tools, used in the coining business..."³⁴ Walter was convicted of a felony and sentenced to be incarcerated in the Castle Gaol in the city of Gloucester for 11 months.³⁵ It is not known when he boarded a ship for America or what became of his wife and children in England but some genealogists believe he arrived sometime in 1781. He married again in 1783 while in Morristown, New Jersey, but moved into New York City when the British Army evacuated the city in November of that year.

After moving to the city, Walter connected with James Jarvis, the future Connecticut and Fugio coiner. He also received financial backing from John Bailey, a prosperous cutler and also a future coiner. Even after serving time in prison for counterfeiting coins, Walter was still very interested in coinage, an occupation where he could put his engraving skills to good use. In early 1784, he traveled back to England on joint business with James Jarvis. After a rough passage and temporarily landing in southern Ireland, he wrote a letter to Jarvis dated February 20, 1784.³⁶ (See the appendix for a complete transcript of the letter.) From the letter it seems that Walter and James Jarvis were planning to set up a covert mint and Walter had traveled to England to bring back the needed equipment, such as stamping and cutting presses.³⁷ They had a location in mind for the mint, which Jarvis was to acquire, but before he set sail for England Walter received another offer for a possible location. He says: "I have had an offer by a gentleman from the West of England to fix in the Malting Business." At this time there was only one person preparing to start a malting and brewery business in New York City and that was Samuel Atlee, plus Samuel was originally from the

33. *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, February 22, 1776.

34. Walter Breen has written in his *Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (p. 78) that Walter Mould was, "a pupil of the Wyons at Birmingham." No reference is given for this statement and it has not been substantiated by primary source documentation.

35. Gary A. Trudgen, "Walter Mould: Convicted Felon," *American Numismatic Society, Journal of Early American Numismatics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, December 2018.

36. The letter was published in its entirety in the summer 1999 issue of the *C4 Newsletter* by Dennis Wierzba. The original letter is held by the Connecticut State Library.

37. At this time, American industry had not recovered sufficiently from the war to produce the screw presses required at the mint.

Bristol area in the west of England. Walter goes on to say, "I told him I could do nothing without your Consent but I really have a great Opinion of it and it may be carried on in that Place with the Other at a small expense." In the end, the brewery location won out. A brewery was an ideal location to operate a clandestine mint,³⁸ especially Samuel's new brewery since it was large and located just north of the city away from prying eyes. In the letter, Walter is intentionally vague about their plans which indicates what they were planning may have been against the law. A high degree of confidence in the accuracy of the preceding interpretation of the letter is reinforced by knowing the future undertakings of Walter and the people he associated with, all of which were coinage related.³⁹

A second letter to James Jarvis provides more information on Walter's trip to England.⁴⁰ By the end of February Walter was in Bristol, England, a city he knew very well. It is probable that Samuel Atlee asked Walter to contact his two sons and deliver a letter to them explaining his situation in America and the proposed mint at the brewery. Samuel's sons were nearby in their hometown of Bath, a short 14 miles from Bristol. What exactly took place is likely lost in the mists of time, but from what is known concerning future events, the younger son, James, jumped at the opportunity to see America firsthand while John stayed home with his mother, Ann. Within two months, Walter completed his business and by May 1, 1784, was on a ship returning to New York. It is likely that James F. Atlee accompanied him on the return voyage which may have also included John Perkin, the future brewery partner.

Walter and James arrived back in New York City about the time when Samuel's first brewery ad appeared in the local papers. Walter returned to his home at the corner of Ann and William Streets while James probably stayed at the brewery. It is certain that James was in the city on August 4, 1784, because he, along with John Perkin and Thomas Fennell, was arrested and charged with as-

38. Christopher McDowell explains why the brewery was an ideal location for the mint in his paper "James F. Atlee, Albion Cox, Bob Birch and the 1792 Birch Cent," *The Colonial Newsletter*, November 2016, p. 4493. In summary, the brewery provided a ready-made distribution network for counterfeit coins since they could be transported along with the delivery of beer to various parts of the city. Large quantities of copper could be purchased without raising suspicion because the brewery operation required this metal for its operation.

39. Another connection to Samuel and James Atlee occurred on July 7, 1787, when Walter Mould appointed William Alexander as his power of attorney. Alexander was Samuel's original partner in the brewery. This action indicates that Walter and William knew each other from their days at the brewery. See Trudgen, "Walter Mould: Convicted Felon?"

40. This letter was written by William Kidson while he was in Philadelphia and dated May 1, 1784. Kidson was a cabinet maker located at 74 Queen Street in New York City. The letter was addressed to James Jarvis at King Street in the city. The original letter was given to the Connecticut State Library in 1941.

sault and battery against John Galvin in the Court of General Quarter Sessions. The defendants pleaded not guilty and were released upon their own recognizance. The trial was held at City Hall on Wednesday, November 2, where the jury found James Atlee and Thomas Fennell not guilty while John Perkin was found guilty and fined £3 plus court costs. Samuel Atlee testified for the defendants at the trial.

The only evidence that James Atlee had learned the engraving trade comes from Thomas Machin's son, Thomas N. Machin, Jr.⁴¹ When junior described his father's mint he wrote, "Atlee, the engraver, wore a horrid mask, and frightened some boys who came to fish so they never ventured near the mill again."⁴² This information had to have been passed down to him by his father because junior was only a toddler when his father's mint was operational. Also, the Atlee he is talking about was James as he and Machin were in charge of operations at the mint. This evidence that James was the engraver at the mint should not be dismissed because junior's description of the building, its location, and how the coins were made is accurate. Therefore, since we know that James was a very capable person, it is probable that Walter Mould taught James the art of die engraving either at his shop or the brewery. It is possible that Walter and James formed a father/son relationship because Walter was twice James' age and they likely spent a long sea voyage together getting to know each other.

It is unknown when the mint at the brewery became operational, but it could have been as early as summer 1784. The mint may have consisted of just two screw presses, one for cutting planchets and the other for stamping them. This would have been the simplest configuration and the easiest to conceal. Flat sheets of copper the thickness of a coin may have been obtained from a local coppersmith. Likewise, the coinage dies might be prepared outside the brewery, most likely at Mould's shop in the city. Walter advertised that he did engraving,⁴³ so he had the necessary equipment to engrave die steel. If the mint could not obtain copper ready for cutting, things got more complicated. The horse mill which contained a sizeable pair of iron rollers could have been repurposed to roll copper instead of malt. A furnace would be needed to anneal the copper as it was rolled to the proper thickness. Of course, the mint would need manpower which may have come from the same men who ran the brewery. The stamping

41. Thomas N. Machin, Jr. was born on July 17, 1785. He graduated from the Albany Law School and became prominent in the military, obtaining the rank of brigadier general. After moving to California he became speaker of the State Legislature in 1863. Returning to New York State he died in Albany on May 18, 1875.

42. Ruttenber, E. M., *History of the Town of Newburgh*. Newburgh, NY, 1859, p. 135.

43. *New-York Morning Post*, September 1, 1785.

press, as described by Machin's son, was large requiring five men to operate it.⁴⁴ Operation of the mint was not trivial, but Walter Mould had the experience and knowledge to pull it off.

The New York law that was on the books concerning counterfeit coppers at the time the brewery mint was established was 31 years old. In 1753 the New York Legislature passed an act intended to combat the importing and passing of counterfeit British coppers. It was in response to a coppers crisis within the city that had caused frenzied rioting, mass confusion, and heated controversy. The statute titled *An Act to Prevent the importing or passing Counterfeits of British Halfpence and Farthings* provided for: 1) A fine of £100 for importing counterfeit British halfpence and farthings; 2) A fine of 10 times the amount of counterfeit money passed; 3) If a person knowingly kept counterfeits in his possession for 10 days, it was equivalent to importing them; 4) Seized counterfeits were to be melted down and the proceeds given to the poor.⁴⁵ The law's provisos were against importing and passing counterfeits and did nothing to prohibit local counterfeiting of coppers.

MINT PEOPLE

Knowing future events, it can be surmised that James F. Atlee oversaw the operation of the brewery mint, with guidance from Walter Mould, while Samuel continued to manage the brewery operation. On February 2, 1787, James petitioned the New York State Assembly for a copper coinage grant, the first of five such petitions. Probably with Samuel Atlee's encouragement, Thomas Machin was the last to petition the Assembly for a copper coinage grant on March 3, 1787. These actions indicate that James had learned the coinage trade and he had confidence that he could fulfill the requirements of a grant if it was awarded to him. Later when Samuel and James Atlee joined in partnership with Thomas Machin, the indenture that formed their company to coin copper states that "James F. Atlee and Thomas Machin shall equally manage, act and perform that

44. E. M. Ruttenber, *History of the County of Orange: with a History of the Town and City of Newburgh*, Newburgh, NY, 1875, pp. 211–12. Thomas N. Machin, Jr. stated: "The coinage press was a screw, with an iron bar about ten feet long through the top. On each end of the bar was a leaden weight of perhaps 500 pounds. The threads of the screw were large and square and worked through an iron frame. Ropes were attached to each end of the bar, and it was swung about half way around by two men pulling upon the ropes; two other men pulled the lever back, and a fifth laid on the blank and took off the coin with his fingers. The last operative sat in a pit so the lever would not touch his head."

45. Gary A. Trudgen, "The 1753 Coppers Crisis in New York," Bowers and Merena, *Rare Coin Review* No. 85, p. 77.

part of the trade which concerns the manufactory of hard-ware.”⁴⁶ Machin was a brilliant civil engineer but he had no experience in running a mint, leaving James as the principal operator.

Legal proceedings indicate who else was involved with the mint operation. One person involved in litigation in union with Samuel and James Atlee was Albion Cox, a skilled assayer but troublesome and debt-ridden.⁴⁷ 35-year old Albion Cox arrived in New York City on October 30, 1783, just three days in advance of Samuel Atlee.⁴⁸ Interestingly, Cox was a fellow passenger with Colonel Matthias Ogden on the ship *Hartford* under Captain Folgar.⁴⁹ Ogden brought back the first report of the signing of the Treaty of Paris which officially ended the war and he personally delivered the good news to Elias Boudinot, the president of Congress. Cox and Ogden’s paths would cross again in less than three years when they both became involved in the coinage of copper for the State of New Jersey.

Albion Cox was from a family of silversmiths and refiners. Located in a section of London known as Little Britain and trading as Cox & Merle, they became the foremost firm of refiners. Cox’s partner, William Merle, was a former apprentice of Robert Albion Cox, Albion’s eldest brother. At the age of 25, Albion Cox was appointed one of the original guardians of the Sheffield Assay Office in 1773, indicating his great skill as an assayer, but he held this position for only one year.⁵⁰ About 10 years later, for unknown reasons, he immigrated to America with the apparent intention of starting a mercantile career. His brother William lent him £11,500, an enormous sum, and he purchased inventory on credit and set up his business at 184 Water Street in New York City. He also invested some of his brother’s money in 1784 by purchasing two shares in the newly established Bank of New York. The city was in a post-war depression, however, and this foray into the business world quickly turned into disaster. Turning back to his roots, he sought employment with Daniel Van Voorhis, a prominent jeweler and silversmith located at No. 27 Hanover Square. This employment was short-lived when Cox became involved in a disagreement with Simeon A. Bayley, one of Van

46. Sylvester S. Crosby, *Early Coins of America*, 1875, p. 194. At this time, the term hard-ware was used to refer to counterfeit copper coins.

47. Together, within the Mayor’s Court, they brought suit against Christopher Duyck-inck in 1786 and they were jointly sued by John Murray, Jr. in 1787.

48. Albion Cox was christened in St. Mary the Virgin church in Gillingham, Dorset County, England on November 18, 1748. His parents were Edward and Mary Cox. *Family-Search*, “England Births and Christenings, 1538–1975,” film no. 1279497.

49. *Pennsylvania Packet*, November 6, 1783.

50. Damon S. Douglas, *The Copper Coinage of the State of New Jersey*, American Numismatic Society, 2003, p. 17.

Voorhis partners. By late April 1785 he was looking again for another employment opportunity.

After a string of apparent business failures, Albion formed a loose partnership with Samuel and James Atlee. Their relationship must have been in regard to the brewery mint based on Albion's background in metallurgy. A covert mint would not need the services of an assayer, however, so what function he served is unidentified. Nevertheless, he would have learned the operation of the mint and furthermore he was introduced to his future partner in coinage, Walter Mould. Also, Thomas Goadsby, the dry goods merchant, was introduced through Cox to the mint. Goadsby and Cox had known each other since March 1785 and likely before that time, when Cox testified at Goadsby's trial before the New York State Assembly for protesting a city tax that he felt did not apply to him.⁵¹

Samuel Atlee apparently formed a strong bond with Albion Cox because on July 7, 1787, he cosigned a £1,200 loan from Thomas Goadsby to Albion Cox. This indicates that Samuel was closely associated with Cox and believed he could trust him. As it turned out, Samuel was naive and was left holding the bag when Cox absconded. Samuel could not pay when Goadsby demanded the money, and in order to avoid debtor's prison he fled to the Republic of Vermont. Later, in an effort to satisfy a portion or perhaps all of the debt to Goadsby, Samuel sold his farm in Orange County, New York, to Goadsby's son, Richard, for £500 on October 23, 1788.⁵² This was an apparent loss of £860 but dependent upon the value of the land when it was sold, the loss may have been as much as £1,200 to cover the debt owed to Thomas Goadsby.

A mint operation needs coinage dies. Good steel is required for the dies along with an engraver capable of engraving and working the steel into a suitable die. Initially the engraver was most likely Walter Mould, the founding member of the mint. Later, James F. Atlee fabricated dies for the mint.⁵³ Mayor's Court litigation reveals that ironmonger Abraham Brevoort was the possible source for good die steel. On December 8, 1785, Brevoort sued Samuel Atlee and in the next session of the court Atlee's attorney, James Giles, confessed judgement

51. Michael J. Hodder, "The Case against Thomas Goadsby," *The Colonial Newsletter* August 1997, p. 1701.

52. New York, Orange County, Index to deeds grantors A-J 1703-1869, Liber D, pp. 413-15, *FamilySearch* Film number 7157717.

53. There is also the possibility that Bob Birch was involved with the brewery mint. However, his association with Albion Cox probably came after Cox had obtained the New Jersey contract and Birch engraved dies for the Rahway mint. Bob Birch sued Albion Cox in the New York City Mayor's Court on March 6, 1787, but the case was dismissed when Birch failed to file his declaration. See Christopher R. McDowell, "James F. Atlee, Albion Cox, Bob Birch and the 1792 Birch Cent," *The Colonial Newsletter*, November 2016, p. 4500.

ABRAHAM BREVOORT,
No. 26, Queen-Street,
 At the Sign of the FRYING-PAN,
Has Imported in the last ships from Bristol,
 A General Assortment of
Ironmongery and Cutlery,
Amongst which are the following Articles;
NAILS, 3d, 6d, 8d, 12d, 20, and 40d.
 Shovels and Spades, Brimstone, Cop-
 peras and allum, short and long handled fry-
 ing-pans; German, blistered and English steel,
 brads and iron wire, iron pots, and kettles, sho-
 vels and tongs, copper tea-kettles, sad-irons,
 spike and nail gimblets, pinchers and nippers,
 H and HL hinges, locks of different sorts, pew-
 ter platters, plates, basons, tea-pots and porrin-
 gers, hand and nail hammers, brads handles and
 escutcheons; and a number of other articles too
 tedious to enumerate. II

Figure 12. *New York Packet*, October 4, 1784.

in the amount of £27.9.6, plus court costs. Brevoort had a shop located at No. 26 Queen Street where he sold an assortment of items including “blistered and English steel” (Fig. 12). Therefore, Brevoort may have been the source for the die steel that was used to manufacture the coinage dies used at the brewery mint. He may have also supplied other items required by the brewery, such as nails and hinges.

Both the brewery and the mint required a source for large amounts of copper. Again, Mayor’s Court litigation provides information as to who this person may have been. Thomas Thomas, a tinman, brazier, and coppersmith, located at 206 Queen Street, sued both Albion Cox and Samuel Atlee in 1786 and 1787, respectively. Thomas was granted judgements against Cox for £36.18.6 and £70. When Atlee failed to file a plea, judgement was ordered against him for the amount in the plaintiff’s declaration. See Figure 13 for an advertisement by Thomas which confirms that he had the capability of supplying both the brewery and the mint’s copper needs, plus he was actively seeking new sources of copper to supply the high demand.

In summary, the people directly involved with the brewery mint operation were Walter Mould, James F. Atlee, and Albion Cox. Suppliers of consumable materials used at the mint were Thomas Thomas, Abraham Brevoort, and perhaps others who were not involved in litigation. In the background providing possible financial support were James Jarvis and Thomas Goadsby.

THOMAS THOMAS,
Tinman, Brazier, and Coppersmith, No.
206, Queen-Street, opposite Burling-Slip,
BEGS leave to acquaint his Friends and
the Public in general, that he has
entered very extensively into the manu-
facturing part of the above branches, su-
perior to any imported, and equally as
cheap; and has on hand a very large and
extensive assortment of all kinds of Tin,
Copper, and Brafs Utensils; strong sheet
Iron Stoves, Iron and Tin Stove Pipes,
which he intends selling wholesale and re-
tail on very low terms.
N. B. Brafs and Copper Utensils tin'd
and mended in the best manner, and the
highest price given for old Copper, Brafs,
and Pewter. 90

Figure 13. *Independent Journal*, December 22, 1784.

The people who ran the brewery mint sought legal copper coinage grants from the states or federal government. All would succeed in this endeavor, but the outcome of their attainments was not what they anticipated. James Jarvis was the first to gain his objective in April 1786 when he purchased a majority holding in the legal Connecticut mint. Later he would receive a federal contract to coin copper on May 12, 1787. Next, Walter Mould, Albion Cox, and Thomas Goadsby received a contract from the State of New Jersey on June 1, 1786, leaving James Atlee on his own. As already mentioned James attempted to obtain a contract from New York but failed when the state declined to issue a grant. Finally, James and his father formed a company with Thomas Machin and others on April 18, 1787. They then negotiated a partnership with Reuben Harmon, Jr., on June 7, 1787, who held a copper coinage contract from Vermont. The mint equipment at the brewery was taken down and shipped upriver to Thomas Machin's mills. In their agreement with Harmon they had to be up and running by July of that year. Samuel took whatever action was necessary to shut down the brewery and then moved his family to their farm, just southeast of Machin's residence. James probably also stayed at the farm as he worked at the mint with Thomas Machin.

Richard Harrison was once again faced with an empty brewery which he advertised for sale or lease later that year. The brewery did not sell, but he found two new partners willing to go into the brewing business with him. Richard's

A NEW BREWERY,
 Carried on by *Richard Harrifon, Alexander Robertson,*
 and *James Barron,* under the Firm of
ROBERTSON, BARRON, & Co.
WHO respectfully inform their friends and the
 public, that they have put Mr. Harrifon's
 Brewery, at the North River, in complete repair, in
 order to carry on extensively that Branch of Business;
 and as they intend to spare no expence, that may be
 necessary to insure success to the undertaking, they
 flatter themselves with the hope of encouragement.
They have now ready to deliver,
ÅLE, SPRUCE & SHIP BEER.
 At any house in the city, or on board of ship,
 when directed.
 N. B. Orders left with Alexander Robertson,
 No. 15, Queenstreet. James Barron, No. 22, King-
 street, or at the store of R. & P. Bruce, at No. 3,
 Frontstreet, below the Coffeshouse, will be duly
 attended to.
Wanted to Purchase,
A Large COPPER, and BARLEY and HOPS.
 March 29. 1788.

Figure 14. *New-York Daily Gazette*, March 29, 1788.

new partners were Alexander Robertson and James Barron, and their first ad appeared in the local papers on March 29, 1788 (Fig. 14).

MINT PRODUCTS

No records are known to exist that identify the coins produced at the brewery mint, which is to be expected from a covert operation. However, through the use of historical context, design style, and die and punch linkage the following groups of coins are believed to have been struck at the brewery mint.

AMERICAN-MADE COUNTERFEIT HALFPENCE:

Walter Mould honed his engraving skills in England by fabricating counterfeit British halfpenny dies. After immigrating to America and helping to set up the mint at the brewery it is only logical that he would continue to engrave what he knew best: halfpenny dies. The American-made Group 1 halfpence were undoubtedly the first coinage produced at the brewery mint. It appears that Walter engraved most of the dies for this series, while schooling James F. Atlee in the art of engraving coinage dies. Based on style, only two of the varieties in this group seem to be the complete work of Atlee, those being Vlack 2-71A and 9-76B. It

appears that they were struck at a later date, most likely after the 1786-dated counterfeit Connecticut coppers listed in the following group. The remainder was done by Mould with some assistance from Atlee. These varieties are: Vlack 3-71B, 3-74A, 4-75A, 4-71C, 4-71D, 5-72A, 5-74A, 6-72A, 6-76A, 7-72B, 7-74A, 8-74A,⁵⁴ and 24-72C. Two typical varieties from this group are shown below.⁵⁵



Vlack 2-71A



Vlack 6-76A

1786 MAILED BUST RIGHT CONNECTICUT COPPERS

This series of counterfeit Connecticut coppers is made up of six varieties. The die engraving is mediocre at best and may represent James Atlee's first venture into producing his own dies, without the assistance of Walter Mould. At this time

54. Obverse 8 was a reworked obverse 5 die. See Jack L. Howes, "Atlee Halfpenny Vlack 5-74A: A New Discovery and its Relevance to a Detailed Analysis of Vlack Obverse Dies 5 and 8," *The Colonial Newsletter*, December 2006, pp. 3069-78.

55. Coin images are courtesy of the author and Christopher R. McDowell. All coin images and line drawings are enlarged to show better detail.

Mould was unquestionably preoccupied with obtaining the New Jersey coinage contract. The varieties that make up this series are: Miller 1-A, 2.1-A, 2.1-D.3, 2.2-D.2, 3-D.1, and 3-D.4. The Liberty reverse central device punch on these dies looks to be the same punch used later on the Vermont coppers produced by Atlee at Machin's Mills. Also, the small date numerals on reverse A match those used on Vlack 9-76B from the Group 1 counterfeit halfpence series. Two typical varieties from this group are shown.



Miller 1-A



Miller 2.2-D.2

1786 NON VI VIRTUTE VICI PATTERNS

There are only two varieties of this copper and they are simply known as the “Small Head” and the “Large Head.” Approximately 30 specimens are known of the “Small Head” and the “Large Head” is extremely rare with only two specimens known. There is also a unique “Large Head” obverse paired with a New Jersey style reverse. It is believed that James Atlee engraved the dies and submitted the “Small Head” variety to the New York Legislature along with his petition for a copper coinage grant. The central obverse devices on both varieties depict

a right facing uniformed officer, probably representing George Washington. The Latin obverse legend reads “Not by Force, but by Virtue, have I Conquered” and the reverse legend translates as “At New York 1786.”

Small Head⁵⁶

Large Head

WALTER MOULD PATTERNS

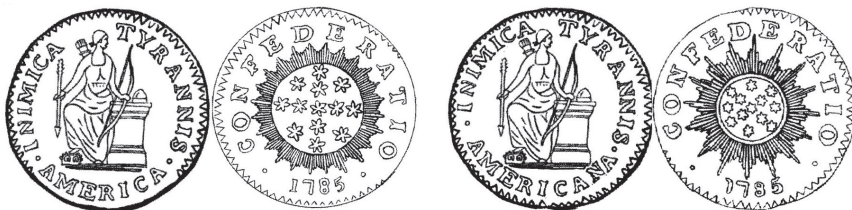
Walter Mould actively pursued a coinage contract from the federal government and the State of New Jersey during the years 1785 and 1786. In May 1785, Walter, along with Solomon Simson and Myer Myers, submitted a proposal to the Continental Congress requesting a coinage grant. Later, that same year, in August, Walter and Edward Bergen submitted another coinage request to congress. Neither of these proposals materialized but finally he achieved success when the State of New Jersey issued a copper coinage contract on June 1, 1786, to Walter, Albion Cox, and Thomas Goadsby. Walter was the principal partner in the agreement and, as the die engraver, would have engraved dies and struck sample coins for the enterprise around the time that the contract was awarded. Also, he may have made dies for the federal proposals. Any pattern coins that were struck for submission with the proposals and the New Jersey contract would have been made at the brewery mint.

The federal patterns tentatively credited to Walter Mould are the Confederatio Decads⁵⁷ and their related muled specimens. The reverse die of the “large stars” decad is found paired with the following unrelated dies: 1) right-facing obverse die of George Washington; 2) 1786-dated *Immunis Columbia* reverse die; and 3) a 1786-dated heraldic eagle reverse die similar to the 1787 New York *Excelsior* specimens. In turn, the preceding unrelated dies are each paired with

56. *Non Vi Virtute Vici* line drawings courtesy Will Nipper, *In Yankee Doodle's Pocket*, 2008.

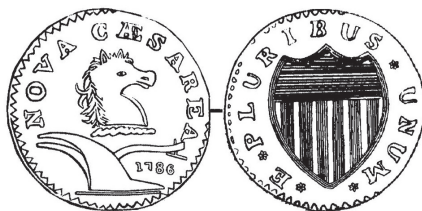
57. The Report of the Grand Committee of the Continental Congress suggested the name “decad” for these coppers, which are approximately the same size and weight as a British halfpenny.

the New Jersey Maris reverse C die. Whereas the reverse die of the “small stars” deced is found paired with a 1787 New York Excelsior reverse.⁵⁸

Large Stars⁵⁹

Small Stars

The New Jersey patterns are thought to be the no coulter plow type with the date beneath the plow beam varieties, specifically Maris 7-C, 7-E, and 8-F. It is believed that these three varieties were made before the Rahway and Morristown mints became operational.⁶⁰



Maris 7-C

GEORGE CLINTON DIE-LINKED COPPERS

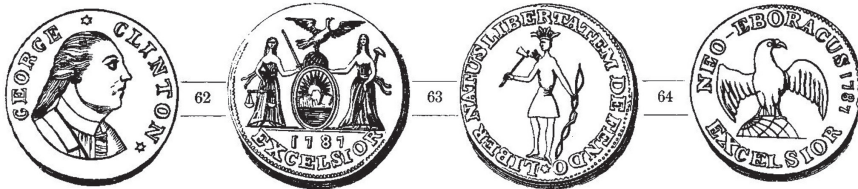
Three die-linked varieties are tentatively attributed to the brewery mint and James Atlee. They are: 1) George Clinton obverse married to a 1787 Excelsior reverse; 2) Standing Indian obverse and the 1787 Excelsior reverse; 3) and Standing Indian obverse with the Eagle on Demi-Globe reverse. It is believed that the George Clinton copper was made in support of Thomas Machin's March 3, 1787, petition to the New York State Assembly for a copper coinage grant. However,

58. See an illustrated die chart of the Confederatio Decads and related pieces on page 347 of *In Yankee Doodle's Pocket* by Will Nipper, 2008, Bowmanstone Press.

59. Confederatio Decads and Maris 7-C line drawings courtesy Will Nipper, *In Yankee Doodle's Pocket*, 2008.

60. See *New Jersey State Coppers*, authored by Roger Siboni, John L. Howes, and A. Buell Ish, pp. 131–50, for an excellent discussion of the “Date under Plow Beam” varieties. This book is an excellent resource. It is well-written with superb research and superior illustrations. It was jointly published in 2013 by The American Numismatic Society and the Colonial Coin Collectors Club.

the George Clinton copper is known overstruck on the small-flan 1787 Immunis Columbia copper and there is evidence that this copper was made later than Machin's petition.⁶¹ If this is correct, it does not completely exclude the coinage grant theory because the dies could have been used again at a later date to overstrike the 1787 Immunis Columbia copper.



George Clinton Copper and Interconnected Dies⁶²

CONCLUSION

In all likelihood, some of the rarest and highly sought pattern coins of the Confederation Era were struck at the brewery mint. The brewery operation failed as a result of the post-war depression but the in-house mint was more fruitful, serving as a training facility and stepping stone for aspiring coiners. Walter Mould was the driving force behind the brewery mint operation, educating James F. Atlee and Albion Cox in the production of coins. Knowing very little about James' life, some numismatists made him into a master engraver who engraved numerous coinage dies, while others questioned if he ever engraved a single coinage die. In reality, based upon a better understanding of his life, it becomes evident that he not only learned how to operate a mint but also how to engrave coinage dies in support of the mint. His early die work was mediocre at best, but with time his artistic engraving capability improved. The coinage operation at Machin's Mills, in all probability, would have never materialized without the Atlees. James Atlee acquired the knowledge and he had the talent to make it happen while Thomas Machin had the facility and desire to explore a new business opportunity. After the private coinage fervor passed, there was no future in coinage for James and he went back to his roots—distillery owner and operator. His father, Samuel, did the same.

61. John Lorenzo and Roger Moore, "The 1787 Immunis Columbia: A late Rahway/Elizabethtown Product?" *C4 Newsletter*, Spring 1997, Vol. 5, No. 1.

62. George Clinton line drawings from Sylvester Crosby, *Early Coins of America*, 1875.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is very grateful to Jack Howes, Christopher McDowell, Phil Mossman, Will Nipper, Jeff Rock, and Ray Williams for reviewing this article and suggesting ways to improve it.

APPENDIX

At the Merchant's Coffee-House,
To be sold at public Vendue,
On Tuesday the 17th Instant October, or at private
Sale any Time before ;

THREE eighths of the Brewery now carried on by Mr. George Harrison and James Leadbetter, in the City of New-York. The buildings belonging to the said brewery are as follows, viz. The brew house, 60 feet by 30 ; mill house, with a complete mill, for grinding malt and pumping water, 30 feet by 25 ; malt house of 4 stories, 60 by 31, besides two kilns of 20 feet square, for drying malt, and two lead cisterns for steeping barley ; a store house 2 stories, 70 by 23, with a vault under the whole. A stable and cooperage, together with 4 dwelling houses. There are belonging to it 26 lots of land of 100 feet by 25 each, 18 whereof are in fence.

Note, One copper, holding upwards of 50 barrels, and 1 ditto of 15 barrels, with coolers proportion'd to each, are to be included in the sale, and all other utensils, stock and materials, to be valued : Any person inclining to purchase the said proportion, may be treated with, by applying to the subscriber on the premises.

JAMES LEADBETER.

His reason for selling his part forefaid, is, that he intends shortly to go for England. 95 98

Appendix Fig. 1. James Leadbetter's October 12, 1769, for sale ad, *New York Journal*.

To be Sold, at Public Auction,
On Wednesday the first Day of March next, at the Mer-
chants Coffee-House, (unless sooner disposed of at pri-
ate Sale)
The very valuable BREWERY and
Buildings,

Situate in the West Ward of the City of New-York, near the Place formerly called Vauxhall, which lately belonged to George Harrison, Richard Nicholls, and James Leadbetter: They consist of

- I. **A** Large, well-built Brick Brew-House, allowed by all competent Judges, to be the most commodious and complete of any in America; in which there are erected two excellent Copper Kettles, the one very large, and the other of smaller Dimensions.
- II. A large Brick Malt-house, with two Cisterns, two large Kilns, and every other Convenience for curing, stowing and preserving Malt.
- III. An excellent Horse-Mill, with a sizeable Pair of Iron Rollers, by Means of which the Water necessary for the Works may be drawn, and the Malt used in it, ground, without any considerable manual Labour.
- IV. A very large and capacious Brick Vault, which adjoins to, and has a Communication with, the Brewhouse Cellar.
- V. A large Storehouse, erected over the Vault, capable of containing great Quantities of Liquors, Hops, Barley, Barrels, &c.
- VI. A large, pleasant and convenient Dwelling-house, two Stories high, having five Rooms on a Floor, a large Garret, two Cellars, and two Cellar-Kitchens.
- VII. A large Dutch Barn, a good Horse Stable, a Cooper's Shop, and two small Dwelling-Houses for the Accommodation of Servants.

The Brewery may vie with any in America, either for Convenience or Pleasantness of Situation:---It lies adjoining to Hudson's River, and large Boats can unload the Barley and Wood requisite for its Use, within a very small Distance of the Works: There is a large Garden inclosed with a Pale Fence, and many young Fruit Trees, of the best Kinds on the Premises. The whole was granted on the 30th Day of October, 1765, by the Rector and Inhabitants of the City of New-York, in Communion of the Church of England, as by Law established, for the Term of ninety-nine Years; paying 37 l. annual Rent, for the first thirty-three Years, 47 l. annual Rent for the next thirty-three Years and 57 l. annual Rent during the Remainder of the Term.

Any Person inclining to purchase at private Sale, may apply to Mrs. Jane Harrison, or to Mr. Richard Harrison, Attorney at Law, in the Broadway.

Also to be Sold at Public Auction,

At the said Brewery, on the second Day of March, aforesaid, a very excellent large Copper Kettle, a Quantity of Barrels and Half Barrels, belonging to the Brewery, a few Butts of Stale Beer, a large Pair of Scales, Beam and Weights, a large Iron Kitchen Grate for burning of Coals, and sundry other Particulars too various to enumerate.

As many Persons still remain indebted to the Estate of the abovenamed George Harrison, deceased, they are hereby requested to pay the several Sums due from them to the aforesaid Mrs. Jane Harrison, who will otherwise be under the disagreeable Necessity of commencing Actions for the Recovery thereof.

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Appendix Fig. 2. Harrison's January 5, 1775, brewery for sale ad; *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*.

Mailed from Kinsale, Ireland.

Dear Jarvis,

I take this opportunity by a Vessel that I am informed will sail from Cork to acquaint you of my situation – after one of the most disagreeable Passages that can be described and bearing within sight of the English Coast for upwards of a Week our Provisions and Water all or nearly all gone we were obliged to put into this Place. I do not mean by this to trouble you with an account of my troubles only as far as my disappointment which in time – we are likely to continue here yet the wind against us so that you see tis impossible I can be in N. York at the time I wished – I flatter myself I shall find letter in England from you and it will be a great satisfaction to be informed you have fixed that Place as I really see many advantages from such a situation – I shall write as soon as I can from England and inform you of everything I find necessary and in the mean time shall do all in my Power to forward our Plans – I have had an offer by a gentleman from the West of England to fix in the Malting Business. I told him I could do nothing without your Consent but I really have a great Opinion of it and it may be carried on in that Place with the Other at a small expense – I have thought of bringing a good Malt make with me but no opinion of any other connection. My best wishes attend you and family and believe me Dear Jarvis

Your affectionate Humble

Sevt

W. Mould

Transcription of Walter Mould's February 20, 1784, letter to James Jarvis

From Little Acorns

DAVID D. GLADFELTER (MEDFORD, NEW JERSEY)

Fifty-seven years ago in Wayland, Massachusetts, Alfred D. Hoch, a design engineer for Raytheon Company in nearby Waltham, sat down at his kitchen table and, on a contact printer, made some photographic plates of early American state-issued coins and a token.¹ One of the coins illustrated was a newly discovered Vermont copper now known as Ryder 37. He modestly wrote up this discovery in a terse single paragraph and printed it, along with a few short snippets by other people, on a single page, wrapped it around the plate (Fig. 1), folded it in half, stapled it together and sent it out to “a few of us who are especially interested in Early American and state coins.” Thus, in October 1960, was *The Colonial Newsletter* born.

Al followed this up with a second issue in January 1961. Like the first, this second issue consisted of a folded photographic plate (Fig. 2) and a single page wrap-around commentary. Each of these issues (Fig. 3) was produced in an edition of only 10.²

1. J. C. Spilman, “A Short History of the ‘Early Issues’ of *The Colonial Newsletter*,” *The Colonial Newsletter* 4:1 (special issue), February 1976, sequential pages 58–59.

2. Verbal statement to me by Al Hoch, which I wrote down but neglected to note the date. It was probably either in 1997, or in 2005, when as counsel to the Civil War Token Society, I negotiated with Al’s company, Quarterman Publications, to supply copies of the second edition of *U. S. Civil War Store Cards* by George and Melvin Fuld—Quarterman’s most commercially successful publication.



Figure 1. Photo plate in CNL No. 1.



Figure 2. Photo plate in CNL No. 2.

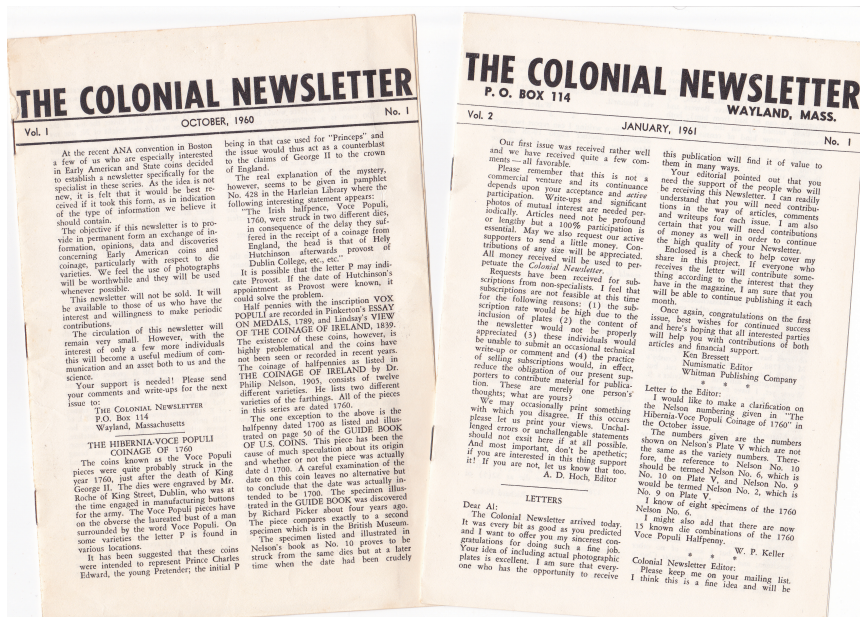


Figure 3. The first two issues of CNL.

Publication continued, with issues being distributed free of charge to those who contributed articles. Circulation slowly grew to approximately 50 copies per issue. So did content, reaching a high of 16 pages for the July 1961 issue. Al switched to more expensive letterpress printing with halftone images. As costs mounted, he told his readers: "On the advice of our supporters, we have established subscriptions for this pamphlet. The present rate is \$5 per year, but will be reduced when possible. Those who contribute articles will receive the newsletter free . . . We are continually in need of articles and write-ups."

Costs kept rising, and the subscription fee was increased to \$7.50 beginning with the October-December 1961 issue in an attempt to cover them. At the same time, Al regretfully announced: "Our offer to continue a free subscription to those who submit articles must, unfortunately, be withdrawn."³ The situation did not improve. A mimeographed statement dated December 1, 1961, showed an operating loss of \$271.56, after only five issues had been published.

After two more issues in 1962, Al suspended publication of CNL. Fortunately, this was not the end.

3. Mimeographed notice sent to a subscriber and signed by Al.

CNL reappeared in August, 1963, under the new management of James C. Spilman, of Little Rock, Arkansas, later of Huntsville, Alabama, an engineer working in the aerospace industry. In that issue, Al, as retiring editor, forecast publication of “some of the most factual articles and reports on Early American Numismatics that any specialized publication has ever produced.” Jim responded: “With this issue, *The Colonial Newsletter* enters a new era which includes a new format, a new editor, and hopefully the continuation of the fine service of the past to those interested in Colonial American Numismatics.” The new format was what Jim described as “aerospace contemporary”—one-sided, 8.5” × 11” pages, inexpensive and convenient to produce, easily reprinted or replaced with corrections and additions, as used for technical reports in his industry. Jim’s first issue was produced on a Xerox office copier.

Jim remained at the *CNL* helm for the next 34 years, turning out more than 1,600 sequential pages of editorial content, including an 86-page *Festschrift* marking *CNL*’s 100th issue in 1995. A frequent contributor, Michael J. Hodder, summarized *CNL*’s “most seminal or timely articles” published during Jim’s tenure in that issue. All the time, Jim kept a stock of back issues available for purchase by new subscribers, or “patrons” as Jim called them. Before retiring as *CNL* editor, Jim started a modern iteration, *CNL ONLINE*, that went free of charge to about 40 subscribers.

The American Numismatic Society took over publication of *CNL* in 1997. It was the “save trees” era. “Aerospace contemporary” yielded to two-sided printing.

So who were the 10 original *CNL* subscribers?

Kenneth Bressett, longtime editor at both the present and former Whitman Publishing Companies, was present at the creation, as were A. R. Boudreau and Philip D. Greco, all of whom contributed information to *CNL*’s first issue. Although no list of original subscribers is known to exist, it is safe to include these three along with editor Al Hoch among the original 10 because of Al’s stated policy of providing copies “to those of us who have the interest and willingness to make periodic contributions”—doubtless meaning articles, but likely including monetary contributions as well.

Additional authors writing in *CNL*’s second issue included W. P. Keller, Walter Breen, and Damia Francis. They, along with Ken Bressett, all acknowledged having received the first issue. These names increase the list of putative original subscribers to seven.

Comments by Richard Picker, Richard A. Parker, Thomas Ollive Mabbott, and Edward Barnsley were also published in *CNL* #2. All told, *CNL*’s first two issues contained information supplied by 11 writers, several of them well known in the colonial numismatic field.

Was Al's memory of his initial press run inexact, or did some writers share their copies? Who today can tell? One thing is certain: Jim Spilman's observation that these modest first issues "have, in their own right, become collector's items."⁴

Parva ne pereant.

4. CNL sequential page 59 (February 1976).



A New Look and Fresh Theory on the Origins of the Rhode Island Ship Medal¹

CHRISTOPHER R. McDOWELL (CINCINNATI, OHIO)

In Katherine Jaeger and David Bowers' book titled the *100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens*,² the Rhode Island ship medal (RISM) ranks 50th, yet little is known of its origin and meaning. The 2019 *Guide Book of United States Coins* places the RISM in the "Colonial Issues" section. The accompanying description states that "[i]t is believed the medal was struck in England circa 1779 or 1780 for the Dutch market, as propaganda to influence Dutch opinion against the American cause. Specimens are known in brass, copper, and pewter." The *Guide Book's* summary accurately reflects current opinion concerning the ship medal, but current opinion is almost entirely incorrect. The false narrative that the RISM is an English propaganda piece is so pervasive today that it was re-

1. An article of this scope could not be prepared in isolation. Along the way I received help and encouragement from many people: David Bowers, Ray Williams, Phil Mossman, Gary Trudgen, and Sydney Martin read drafts and made important edits and suggestions; Julia Casey assisted with some key research in the early stages; Jeff Rock provided many valuable insights that have been incorporated into the final draft; and John Kleeberg corrected my translation of some Dutch words and phrases and made other vital contributions. I am also thankful for the assistance received from The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, which agreed to conduct testing on the Rhode Island ship medals in its collection and share the result for publication in this article.

2. Jaeger & Bowers, *100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens*, (Whitman Pub, 2007).

cently repeated in a Dutch numismatist publication.³ This article endeavors to set the record straight and correct speculation that has become accepted fact and uncover the medal's true origin.

If the mysteries of the RISM were easy to unravel, they would have been deciphered long ago. Because the problems are complex and the avenues of inquiry needed to ferret them out so varied, this article is both lengthy and detailed. The first section examines the different physical characteristics, properties, and design elements of the ship medal and illustrates and catalogs six major types. Next, a review of the numismatic literature is conducted to determine how the current understanding of the medal's origin and meaning was reached. Most everyone agrees that the RISM was intended to circulate in Holland circa 1779. Thus, a major portion of this article is devoted to the geopolitical situation in Europe during the American Revolution and how the Battle of Rhode Island was perceived in Britain, Holland, and America. The final section covers the history of jetons⁴ in the Low Countries and compares the Rhode Island ship medal to Dutch metallic-jetons.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RHODE ISLAND SHIP MEDAL

The imagery and wording on the Rhode Island ship medal have been given many different interpretations over the years. Nevertheless, an accurate description of the medal can still yield important insights. There are six different varieties of RISM—all of which share the same basic design. Only a single pair of dies was used to strike all the medals, but there are two different die states: the first has the word *vlugtende* on the reverse die under the single large ship, and the second is a modification of the reverse die with a wreath covering *vlugtende*. The primary difference between the six types is in the metal used—either brass or pewter—and in the wording and/or design or lack thereof under Admiral Richard Howe's flagship on the reverse. The weights and sizes of brass RISMs are inconsistent. Generally, they fall into a range between 31 to 33 mm in diameter and weigh between 135 to 180 grains, with most falling somewhere around 32 mm and 151 grains. The pewter version is much more consistent in its weight and size at around 133 grains and 32 mm. The only thing consistent about the more numerous brass RISMs' sizes and weights is that they are inconsistent—quality control was clearly not a priority in their manufacture. There could be many reasons for

3. Joep Haffmans, "Het Rhode Island Ship Token Een Nederlandstalige Engelse propaganda-penning uit de Amerikaanse Vrijheidsoorlog," *De Beeldenaar* (2005-5), p. 211.

4. This word may be spelled either "jeton" or "jetton." Although jetton is the proper American spelling, the European spelling of jeton is used here for consistency and because the American spelling is losing popularity.



Figure 1. Type 1, Betts-561, W-1725, PCGS #582 brass Rhode Island Ship Medal with *Vlugtende* under large ship on reverse.

this, but at least one likely explanation is that the RISM was never intended to circulate as an exchange medium; thus, quality control regarding weight and size was not a very important consideration in its manufacture—coins and tokens generally must maintain tight weight tolerances, particularly if struck in silver or gold, but medals, medalets, and jetons are generally not as precise.

Type 1: *Vlugtende* On Reverse / Brass (Figure 1)⁵

REVERSE: Although it is not obvious which side of the medal is the obverse and which is the reverse, the side with one large ship has generally, but not always, been understood to be the reverse. Because the key to understanding the differences in the varieties rests primarily with the reverse, it should always be examined first; as such, it will be presented to the left in all the figures in this article. The Dutch wording, *DE ADMIRAALS FLAG VAN ADMIRAAL HOWE 1779*, translates to *THE ADMIRAL'S FLAG OF ADMIRAL HOWE 1779*. American numismatic books, auction catalogs, and articles almost always incorrectly translated the wording as “*THE FLAGSHIP OF ADMIRAL HOWE 1779*.”⁶ The Dutch word for “flagship” is *vlaggenschip*, which appears nowhere on the medal. At the same time, the Dutch word for flag is *vlag*. Therefore, the medal's legend,

5. Heritage Auction 2014 Jan. 8–12, Lot 3109, Ex: John W. Adams Collection; Sold for \$152,750.00. Ex: Col. James W. Ellsworth Collection; Garrett Collection (Bowers and Ruddy, 10/1980), lot 1325; Roper Collection (Stack's, 12/1983), lot 170. The Roper Sale had 5 of the 6 varieties illustrated here.

6. See, e.g., Jaeger & Bowers, *100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens*; and William U. Nipper, *In Yankee Doodle's Pocket: The Myth, Magic and Politics of Money in Early America* (Bowmanstone Press, Conway, AR, 2007), p. 252.

which is otherwise in Dutch, includes the English word “flag.”⁷ The legend’s focus is on the ship’s flags, not the ship. Accordingly, a closer examination of the flags is in order.

The reverse image is of the starboard broadside view of a large English wooden double-decker man-of-war with the ensign flying at an angle from the stern. Pennants also fly from the three masts and the jack staff attached to the bowsprit at the fore of the vessel. Typically a flag is only flown from the jack staff when a ship is at anchor. Pursuant to naval regulations in place between 1705 and 1805, admirals flew their flag at the head of their vessel atop the foremast. An admiral normally commanded from the largest, fastest, or most noteworthy warship in his charge. The admiral’s flag signaled to the other ship captains the admiral’s location and where to look for commands in battle. When an admiral went ashore or was no longer in command his flag was lowered. None of the flags flown from the ship on the medal are consistent with a vice-admiral’s flag in use in 1778 or 1779.⁸ Rather the flags depict the White Ensign or St. George’s Ensign, a symbol of England since the time of Richard I. On high grade well-struck examples the image on the pennant atop the foremast appears to have an anchor-like design rather than St. George’s Ensign, but, even if this is the case, a pennant depicting an anchor looks nothing like a vice-admiral’s flag. According to naval custom, the mainmast flag on a warship should be a commissioning pennant unless displaced by a rectangular rank flag. Even when a captain was absent from his warship the commissioning pennant would remain aloft. The ship’s sails are furled and it rests in the water. Therefore, it is surmised that the ship is Admiral Lord Richard Howe’s flagship, HMS *Eagle*, at a time when he is absent from service—this interpretation is consistent with the historical evidence presented later in this article and is a key part of the Dutch satire lost on modern collectors.

Below the water at the 6 o’clock position is the Dutch word “*VLUGTENDE*.” The inclusion of this word on the reverse was an error that was obliterated on all but two examples either by grinding it off or covering it with an ornamental detail. Type 1 is distinguished by the fact that it includes *vlugtende* on the reverse. The word *vlugtende* adorns the reverse of Type 1 and obverse of all varieties.

A 1771 Dutch-Latin dictionary translates *vlugt* as “flight”, *vlugten* “to flee”,

7. John Kleeberg provides this additional analysis on the subject that is worth consideration: “Flag’—this may be an English loan word in Dutch that hasn’t been adjusted for Dutch spelling just yet. So the Dutch spelled the word ‘flag’ just as we preserve the spelling of foreign loan words like ‘oeuvre’ or ‘Zeitgeist.’ I do find eighteenth century instances of the spelling ‘*vlag*’ but it isn’t that common a word. ‘*Vlag*’ may just be a Batavisation of the English spelling ‘flag.’” Correspondence with John Kleeberg August 4, 2018.

8. Lord Richard Howe was a vice-admiral of the blue during the American Revolution. A vice-admiral’s flag, per Royal Navy regulations, was rectangular with a red cross on a white field with a red dot in the upper-left corner.

and *vlugtende* as “fleeing”—all are variants of *fugere*—Latin for “to flee.”⁹ As used on the medal, *vlugtende* has been translated by numismatists as having many different meanings over the years, but the best and most common translation is “fleeing.”¹⁰ It is often suggested that the word “*vlugtende*” on the Rhode Island ship medal is a misspelling of the modern Dutch word “*vluchtende*,” which also translates to fleeing in English.¹¹ *Vlugtende*, however, was an accepted spelling in Holland during the 18th century, although it is not in use there today.¹² In the Afrikaans language, *vlugtende* is the correct spelling for a word still in wide use that translates to “fleeing” in English. Afrikaans is an official language of South Africa and is derived from Dutch, particularly Southern Holland dialects, German, and French. Although it is a sister language to Dutch, it is distinct. Often called “Kitchen Dutch” or “Cape Dutch” it was brought to Africa by settlers of the Dutch East India Company in the 17th and 18th centuries; thus, the possibility exists that *vlugtende* is the proper spelling of a Dutch word in use in 18th century Holland meaning fleeing.¹³ This author believes its use on the obverse of the RISM was not intended to portray a cowardly act, but something more akin to a sly fox that has evaded capture by swiftly eluding the hound.

OBVERSE: The image on the obverse is a scene from the Battle of Rhode Island. The image and wording are identical on all known varieties. The Dutch legend *D’ VLUGTENDE AMERICAANEN VAN ROHDE YLAND AUG’T 1778* can be translated as *THE FLEEING AMERICANS OF RHODE ISLAND AUG’T 1778*. In the center of the medal is Aquidneck Island with three English frigates to the west. Continental soldiers are moving away from the warships onto thirteen small boats to the east of the island. The three warships, like the larger image of a ship on the reverse, all have their sails furled. The soldiers are arranged in orderly rows of four with muskets shouldered. On some well-struck high grade

9. Samuel Hannot, *Nederduitsch en Latynsch woordenboek, ten dienste der Latynsche schoulen* (Amsterdam, 1771)

10. See, e.g., Walter Breen, *Walter Breen’s Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (Doubleday, New York, 1988), p. 125.

11. See, e.g., Nipper, *In Yankee Doodle’s Pocket*, p. 252 (“One of the three known medal varieties has the word ‘*vlugtende*’ beneath his ship. It actually should read ‘*vluchtende*,’ Dutch for ‘fleeing’”); See also, Heritage Auction Feb. 2016, Lot 3006 (“The first medals struck (Betts-561) included the legend *VLUGTENDE*, a misspelling of the Dutch word (*vluchtende*) for fleeing, but since that could be interpreted that the Redcoats fled instead of the Yanks, the offending word was scraped by hand from the struck medals”).

12. Proof of this can be found by examining books published in Amsterdam between 1746 and 1789 that included *vlugtende* in the title like *De Vlugtende Banqueroetier*, published in Amsterdam in 1746, and *De Vlugtende Wijsgeer* published in Amsterdam in 1789

13. It has also been suggested that *vlugtende* means retreating, but the English word “retreating” is *terugtrekkende* in Dutch.

specimens it is possible to see bayonets fixed to the muskets.¹⁴ The Americans are bent at the waist as if moving quickly, but the presence of their muskets and organized rows helps create the impression of a disciplined strategic withdrawal rather than a panicked flight. The thirteen boats could represent the thirteen colonies there to safely receive them. Crossed palm branches, a symbol of victory, appear below the obverse image.

Type 1 is extremely rare with only two examples having surfaced since 1905.¹⁵ Michael Hodder believed there might be as many as four or as few as three extant, but only two can be confirmed at this time. The illustrated coin (Figure 1) was previously owned by John Adams of Boston and is now in Sydney Martin's collection. The other example is in the Massachusetts Historical Society, a gift of William Sumner Appleton in 1905. Hodder subjected both known Type 1 specimens to x-ray fluorescence ("XRF") testing in order to determine the metallic content of each. The Adams medal was confirmed to be 51.88% zinc, 45.79% copper, and 2.33% iron, while the Appleton-MHS specimen is 46.03% zinc, 53.08% copper, and 0.89% iron.¹⁶ This is a highly unusual brass alloy, which is discussed in great detail later in this article. The XRF process examines surface metals; thus, if the core is composed of something different, it would not necessarily be detected by this scientific method. Hodder understandably assumed the entire medal was consistent with the surface analysis. The accuracy of this assumption, however, is in doubt as a result of testing performed in 2009 on a RISM discovered by Marc Mayhugh that has a pewter-like inner-core surrounded by a brass outer layer.¹⁷

PCGS *CoinFacts* lists eight different varieties of RISM instead of the six listed here.¹⁸ This is because PCGS has described several of the medals encapsulated within its plastic holders as being struck in brass, but the word "brass" has been left off the vast majority of PCGS encapsulated ship medals. This has led to the incorrect assumption that the RISM can be found in pewter, brass, and copper.¹⁹ This is an error. All RISMs have a brass or pewter surface except Type

14. See, e.g., Stack's, John J. Ford Collection, May 11, 2004, Lot 265.

15. The Massachusetts Historical Society example was illustrated on the cover and inside *The Colonial Newsletter*, Serial No. 84, Vol. 30, No. 1, March 1990.

16. Michael Hodder, "The Appleton-Massachusetts Historical Society Rhode Island Ship Token with Vlugtende," *The Colonial Newsletter*, Serial No. 84, Vol. 30, No. 1, March 1990.

17. Marc Mayhugh, "A Puzzling Copy of the Rhode Island Ship Medal," *C4N*, Vol 17, No. 2, Summer 2009, p. 18. Mayhugh did not include the weight of his RISM in his article, but it was weighed on April 24, 2018, and determined to be 172 grains; well within the range of weights for an authentic RISM.

18. PCGS *CoinFacts* at www.pcgscointfacts.com. Last checked March 9, 2018. See, PCGS # 575 and # 588.

19. It was believed at one time that copper examples existed. The alleged copper pieces

6, which has a silver-like wash over brass. Unfortunately, the misconception that there exists a very rare brass variety has carried over into several recent auction lot descriptions where PCGS encapsulated RISM's with the word "brass" on the holder have been listed as an extremely rare brass variety.²⁰ As shown by the XRF analysis performed by Michael Hodder in 1990, the EDAX analysis performed in 2009 on the Mayhugh specimen, plus recent XRF test results presented later in this article, the surface of RISM Types 1, 2, and 4 are composed of an alloy of copper and zinc; more commonly known as brass. Far from being extremely rare, brass is the most popular alloy used to strike Rhode Island ship medals; a warning that collectors should buy the coin, not the holder.²¹

Type 2: *Vlugtende* Removed from Reverse / Brass (Figure 2)²²

Type 2 is the same as Type 1 except the word "*vlugtende*" has been effaced from the field. The removal occurred after the medal was struck and was performed by hand. This work would have been labor intensive. Presumably, it was the intention of the manufacturer to obliterate the word from the reverse of every medal struck, but somehow a few were missed; creating Type 1, with *vlugtende* under the Howe's ship, and Type 2, with *vlugtende* obliterated from the medal. A few are known where the job of removing the word was not done completely leaving hints of *vlugtende* visible. (Figure 2a).²³

are, according to John Lorenzo, actually "brass specimens which have toned and cored to simulate a copper appearance." See, John Lorenzo, "The Rhode Island Ship Medal and Matthew Boulton," *C4N*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Fall 1997, p. 25. Lorenzo's opinion is borne out by the scientific testing conducted as part of this article.

20 See, e.g., Heritage Auction, Jan. 3–8, 2018, Lot 3035 ("Brass Rhode Island Ship tokens are decidedly more rare than ones struck in copper").

21. In the latest edition of *A Guide Book of United States Coins, Deluxe Edition*, ("Mega Red") edited by Q. David Bowers, it states that the medal is known in "pinchbeck, copper, and pewter." This is an error. Pinchbeck is a form of brass that closely resembles gold invented in the 18th century by Christopher Pinchbeck, a London clockmaker. The typical composition of pinchbeck brass is copper and zinc in a ratio of 93% to 89% copper to between 11% to 7% zinc. As shown by all the known metallurgical testing of RISM's, the ratio of copper to zinc is closer to 54/46 on the surface. There are also no known copper examples of this medal. All specimens believed to be copper are actually brass. Similarly, in the 2019 *Guide Book of United States Coins* (The "Red Book"), p. 62, edited by Jeff Garrett, it incorrectly states that "specimens are known in brass, copper, and pewter."

22. Stack's, August 11, 2016, Lot 3005.

23. Image of Type 2 RISM from Heritage Auction Jan. 8–12, 2014, Lot. No. 3270. Other examples where parts of *vlugtende* can still be seen on Type 2 RISM's are: Bowers & Ruddy Galleries Catalog of the Garrett Collection, Part 3, Oct. 1–2, 1980, Lot 1326; and McCawley & Grellman 13th Annual C-4 Convention Sale, Dec. 1, 2007, Lot 60.



Figure 2. Type 2, Betts 562, W-1730, PCGS #586, brass Rhode Island Ship Medal with *Vlugtende* effaced by hand from reverse.



Figure 2a. Enlarged section of a Type 2 RISM showing fragments of *Vlugtende* still visible.

Type 3: *Vlugtende* Removed from Reverse / Pewter (Figure 3)²⁴

Type 3 is the same as Type 2 and made from the same dies, the only difference being that it was struck in pewter instead of brass. The word “*vlugtende*” is effaced from this medal as well, leaving a blank area under Admiral Howe’s flag-ship. Walter Breen, who did not illustrate Type 3 in his 1988 *Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*, called it a “[p]ewter trial piece” and extremely rare.²⁵ It is this author’s opinion, however, that it was not a trial piece but rather a separately issued pewter medal. This is the second rarest type with very limited auction records. PCGS has certified only 5 examples of Type 3: an AU58, AU55, AU53, AU50, and XF45. NGC has certified only one, an XF45. The PCGS XF45²⁶

24. Heritage Auction Jan. 2014, Lot 1201.

25. Walter Breen, *Walter Breen’s Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (Doubleday, New York, 1988), p. 125.

26. Heritage Auction Sept. 2005, Lot 384.



Figure 3. Type 3, Betts-562, W-1735, PCGS #586, pewter Rhode Island Ship Medal with *Vlugtende* effaced by hand from reverse.

shows considerably more wear than the NGC XF45,²⁷ but the NGC medal has tin pest damage²⁸ in a few areas. Moreover, the PCGS XF45 and AU50²⁹ look to be the same medal recertified in a higher grade. An examination of auction sales between 1860 and today confirms three additional Type 3 medals sold in 1904 and 1905, which, based on their descriptions, do not appear to be included in those that have been certified;³⁰ thus, the confirmed number extant is nine with a few more suspected.

Type 4: Wreath Under Ship on Reverse / Brass (Figure 4)³¹

Type 4 is from the same die that was used for Types 1–3, but the reverse die was modified to place a wreath over *vlugtende* on the reverse. Some of the letters in *vlugtende* can still be seen peeking out from underneath on most examples. Michael Hodder objected to the term “wreath,” believing the covering to be more

27. Heritage Auction Feb. 2016, Lot 1232.

28. “Tin pest” is an autocatalytic, allotropic transformation of the element tin that causes deterioration of tin objects at low temperatures. Tin pest has also been called tin disease, tin bright, or tin leprosy. This process can cause significant and even total destruction of tin coins.

29. Heritage Auction May 2008, Lot 1108.

30. Other Type 3 ship medals have been auctioned, but they were higher grade and could be among those certified by PCGS and NGC. The 3 uncertified low-grade specimens were part of the collection of Ralph R. Baker, Esq. of Newport, Rhode Island, sold 7/8/1904, Lot 343 described as “corroded” “Very Good” and the sale of Chicago collector Charles Morris’ collection on 4/20/1905, Lot 51, described as “slightly bent” “very fine,” and Lot 52 described as “good.”

31. Stack’s Auction March 2013.



Figure 4. Type 4, Betts-563, W-1740, PCGS #587, brass Rhode Island Ship Medal with wreath covering *Vlugtende* on the reverse.

accurately described as an “ornamental detail.” Horatio R. Storer described it as “two clusters of laurel leaves united by a thunderbolt.”³² Simplicity, however, prevails over accuracy in this instance and we shall continue the harmless though inaccurate tradition of calling it a wreath. This is by far the most common variety, with hundreds known in various grades.

Type 5: Wreath Under Ship on Reverse / Pewter (Figure 5)

Type 5 is the same as Type 4, but in pewter. Although still rare, this is the more common of the two pewter types with over 30 known today. It also has the distinction of being the only type of RISM recovered from an official archaeological site; although amateur metal detectorists have unearthed others in Holland.³³ Significantly, there are no known reports of a Rhode Island ship medal having

32. H. R. Storer, *The Medals and Tokens of Rhode Island*, (Privately Printed, 1895), p. 4.

33. Ranjith M. Jayasena, “Revolutionary War and an Amsterdam Privy: The Remarkable Background of a Rhode Island Ship Token,” *Northeast Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 40, Article 7, 2011, p. 123; See also, same article in Dutch, Ranjith M. Jayasena, “Amerikaanse revolutie in een Amsterdamse beerput: De opmerkelijke achtergrond van een Rhode Island Ship Token,” *De Beeldenaar* (2005) 5, 211. An official report of the archaeological site can be found at, J. Gawronski and R. Jayasena (2011), “Wonen achter de Oudezijds Voorburgwal: Archeologische opgraving Oudezijds Armsteeg,” Amsterdam (2008). (AAR (Amsterdamse Archeologische Rapporten); No. 60). Amsterdam: Gemeente Amsterdam, Bureau Monumenten & Archeologie. Images of two RISMs found by metal-detectorist in Holland can be seen at: <http://home.vondsten.nl/vondsten/44216/> and <http://www.lodenpenningen-mereaux.be/438967911> The second is identified as pewter and appears to be a Type 5.



Figure 5. Type 5, Betts-563, W-1745, PCGS #585, pewter Rhode Island Ship Medal with wreath covering *Vlugtende* on the reverse. Recovered from Amsterdam privy in 2008.

been recovered in America, England, or Wales.³⁴ In 2008, the City of Amsterdam Office of Monuments and Archaeology excavated a late eighteenth century privy in Amsterdam's city center that yielded, among other items, a Type 5 pewter RISM. (Figure 5).³⁵ The privy was brick-lined and dated from between 1750 and 1800. Based on tax records from the period, it was determined the cesspool was a communal facility shared by several houses in an urban lower-middle class neighborhood.³⁶ The recovered specimen had four small holes carefully hammered through it at the four compass points and showed wear after the holes were punched.³⁷ The assemblage included one other numismatic item, a copper jeton bearing the bust of the Austrian Emperor Leopold II dated between 1790 and 1792.³⁸ Based on the ship medal's appearance, it was the opinion of the Dutch archeological team that it "may have served as a clothing ornament, as a counter for card games, or possibly even a child's toy."³⁹ If used as a child's toy, it may have been similar to the humdingers and buzzers described by Edward

34. See, Portable Antiquities Scheme, <https://finds.org.uk/>

35. Photo courtesy of City of Amsterdam, Office of Monuments and Archaeology. I am personally grateful to Ranjith M. Jayasena for answering questions about the find and helping obtain this image.

36. Jayasena, "Revolutionary War and an Amsterdam Privy," p. 126.

37. *Ibid.*, Fig. 2, p. 124.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 126. Images of the jeton found with the ship medal sent to the author by Mr. Jayasena in April 2018 show that it did not have any holes punched in it.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

Barnsley in his 1962 *CNL* article.⁴⁰ The placement of the holes, however, is more suggestive of a button or some ornamental piece sewn onto a garment.⁴¹

The Newman Numismatic Portal includes private correspondence between T. D. Howe and Eric Newman (December 1977 to May 1978)⁴² relating to Howe's purchase of a Type 5 ship medal from Bowers & Ruddy's December 1977 sale.⁴³ Howe submitted the medal to Newman for his opinion as to its authenticity. On April 12, 1978, Newman replied calling Howe's attention to some troubling findings. The medal's border beading, in Newman's opinion, did "not seem to be normal for a struck piece." It was further noted that it was missing border beads in several places around the rim "and they come to abrupt ends rather than phase off." This, Newman believed, was more indicative "of a casting defect" rather than metal adhering to the die. The April 12 letter concludes with the statement that "[t]hese matters require further thought." A little less than a month later, on May 9, 1978, Newman wrote Howe again, this time stating that he had obtained other specimens to compare to Howe's medal and concluded that it "must be a cast of another piece and, therefore, false in my opinion." At the time of his examination Newman believed there were only two known Type 5 ship medals and was disturbed by the fact that two additional pewter medals had suddenly appeared on the market, of which Howe's was one. In addition to the beading, Newman also felt the edge was "rounded rather than vertically punched out as in other brass and pewter pieces." Scientific testing on Howe's specimen showed it had a specific gravity of 7.15, which was consistent with testing on known specimens conducted by Newman. Regardless, Newman felt the medal was spurious and told Howe so. On May 12, 1978, Howe wrote back thanking Newman for his efforts and indicated he was going to return the medal to Bowers & Ruddy as a cast counterfeit.⁴⁴

40. Edward R. Barnsley, "Humdingers and Buzzers," *CNL*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Serial No. 7, April-June 1962, pp. 49-50. It should be noted that the holes in the pewter RISM excavated from the Amsterdam privy do not match the holes described by Barnsley, which is why the word "similar" is used in the text above.

41. The practice of wearing holed coins on clothing is discussed in: Hermann Maué, Ludwig Veit, et al, *Münzen in Brauch und Aberglauben*, (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, 1982) pp. 106-18. The book further includes photographs of Upper Bavarian peasants wearing coins sewn on their clothing.

42. <https://nnp.wustl.edu/> The NNP is an outstanding resource and was used extensively in the preparation of this article. The Portal has opened a world heretofore closed to researchers interested in colonial numismatics.

43. Bowers & Ruddy Catalog, Dec. 8, 1977, Lot 5040. According to the Prices Realized sheet printed in 1978, the lot sold for \$925.00. The description simply read "1778-79 Rhode Island ship token in pewter (instead of the customary brass). Wreath below ship. Pleasing. Extremely Fine with attractive light gray surfaces. Very rare."

44. In private correspondence with David Bowers in May 2018, he stated he did not

An examination of auction records shows that Newman was incorrect in his belief that there were only two known Type 5 pewter RISMs in 1978; however, it would be accurate to state that a careful review of auction records from 1862 to today shows a surge in the late 1970s and 1980s in public sales of pewter pieces of both types, which was really Newman's key concern. Moreover, an abnormally high percentage of the new specimens sold were mint state. This is a bit disconcerting; particularly considering that few of these pieces were sold with a description that included a detailed provenance.⁴⁵ This, of course, could be for many reasons other than modern cast forgeries entering the market. As for Newman's concerns with the beading; an examination of Fig. 5, the Type 5 discovered in the Amsterdam privy, shows the beading ending abruptly on the reverse between the "1" and the "7" in "1779" and a general absence of beading in many other places. Similar beading issues have been observed by this author on other Type 3 and Type 5 pewter ship medals. As for the rounded edges on Howe's piece, Newman was correct that this is an unusual characteristic; however, smoothed rounded edges have been observed on several authentic brass pieces. Unlike Newman, the present author did not have the opportunity to personally examine T. D. Howe's ship medal, but Newman's opinion that it was a cast counterfeit is, in light of information gathered since 1978, questionable. If Howe did purchase a cast counterfeit, it is doubtful just one was made, which may or may not account for the surge in sales of high-grade Type 5 specimens, but unless the counterfeiter had a time machine and tossed a piece with similar beading characteristics down an Amsterdam privy in the 18th century for archeologists to find in 2008, we can rest a little easier.

Type 6: Silvered Brass (Figure 6)⁴⁶

A very thin layer of silver covers the medal and was applied at or near the time of striking. This is a controversial type and very rare with less than eight confirmed recall Howe or anyone else returning an item to Bowers & Ruddy as being a counterfeit during the 1970s.

45. According to PCGS Population Guide, 29% of the slabbed Type 5 ship medals are MS60 or above and another 44% are between AU50 and MS60. NGC's data shows 33% are mint state. PCGS *CoinFacts* shows two graded at MS64 and two at MS63—these are the four highest graded pewter RISMs. These statistics need to be taken with a grain of salt because of resubmissions of the same medal, and the fact that not all RISMs are encapsulated and some collectors with lower grade medals or medals with tin pests or other environmental issues may be less likely to attempt to encapsulate their medals. On the other hand, many of the lower grade medals appear to have received a net grade because of surface irregularities (tin pests and environmental damage) rather than a grade based on actual wear.

46. Heritage Auction, Nov. 1, 2017, Lot 1260 (Newman Collection, Part IX). The medal was listed as weighing 140.5 grains.



Figure 6: Type 6A (*Vlugtende* effaced), PCGS #575, silvered Rhode Island Ship Medal.

extant. Type 6 almost never appears at auction and little has been written on it.⁴⁷ John Lorenzo, writing in the *C4 Newsletter* in 1997, stated that he believed them to be genuine, i.e., contemporaneous. Lorenzo did have some reservations as to the authenticity of silvered RISMs because he did not understand why the manufacturer just did not hot-work silver into the brass mixture.⁴⁸ The answer to this question may be because the brass medals have a tin or pewter-like inner-core as demonstrated by Marc Mayhugh's testing or the distributor may have wanted to sell some examples as if they were pure silver, but did not want to incur the expense of a solid silver medal. It is also possible, based on testing detailed later in this article, that the silvering was applied by customers after purchase. During the late 18th century, it was not uncommon to silver brass or pewter medals.

All of the existing silvered medals demonstrate extensive wear with the exception of the mint state specimen in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's collection, which is discussed later, and an XF specimen in a large private collection. The rest have the silvering partially worn off, meaning they were either carried as pocket pieces, saw circulation, or were used as counters or gaming pieces. Both Type 2 and Type 4 brass RISMs are known to have been silvered—one under-type does not appear to be rarer than the other. It has been suggested to this author that perhaps there should be seven or more types of RISMs—with additional types for each of the varieties with a silver coating. Certainly a scrupulous collector might want to obtain both a Type 2 and Type 4 silvered RISM out of completeness. If someone were to do so, the silvered Type 2 would be Type

47. In addition to the Newman medal at Figure 6, another Type 6 was sold at the 2008 C4 auction, lot 144.

48. John Lorenzo, "The Rhode Island Ship Medal and Matthew Boulton," *C4N*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Fall 1997, p. 25.

6A and the silvered Type 4 would be Type 6B. Should either of the pewter RISMs be discovered in the future to have been silvered, they should be labelled Type 6C (Type 3 under-type silvered) and Type 6D (Type 5 under-type silvered) and should some lucky soul discover a silvered Type 1, it can be designated Type 6E.

NUMISMATIC HISTORY OF THE RHODE ISLAND SHIP MEDAL

This section will examine the numismatic literature concerning the RISM to determine what can be learned from the collective wisdom of others over the last two hundred years and to understand how we arrived at the current belief that the RISM is an English propaganda piece. Also included are references made concerning the RISM in newspapers, magazines, and books both in Holland and the United States, some of which have never been published in America before. Instead of waiting until the end to address issues, they are discussed in each section whenever possible. The literary story of the RISM begins in the most unlikely of places—feudal Japan.

Kutsuki Masatsuna's 1787 Book *Seiyō senpu* (Notes on Western Coinage)

The RISM was first mentioned and illustrated by Kutsuki Masatsuna in his 1787 book *Seiyō senpu* (Notes on Western Coinage) (Fig. 7). Masatsuna was a polymath and keen student of Western culture and knowledge. As the hereditary *daimyō* of Oki and Ōmi with holdings in Tanba and Fukuchiyama, he was an extremely powerful feudal lord permitted eccentricities that would have resulted in death or imprisonment for ordinary citizens in his closed society; this included the exchange of coins and information with foreigners. Masatsuna learned to speak and write Dutch and befriended Isaac Titsingh, a senior official of the Dutch East India Company who represented that company's interests in an exclusive contract with Tokugawa Japan. As a result of religious proselytizing during the 16th century, the Tokugawa shogunate instituted a policy prohibiting any foreigner from entering Japan under penalty of death. The only persons exempt from this law were a limited number of representatives of the Dutch East India Company. It is unknown when or how Titsingh and Masatsuna first met, but it must have been in 1779 or early 1780, because Titsingh arrived in Japan in 1779 and wrote a letter to Masatsuna giving him an atlas in 1780.⁴⁹ Both Titsingh and Masatsuna were avid coin collectors, and numismatics was a frequent subject of their correspondence.

49. Timon Screech, *Secret Memoirs of the Shoguns: Isaac Titsingh and Japan, 1779–1822* (Routledge, New York, 2006).

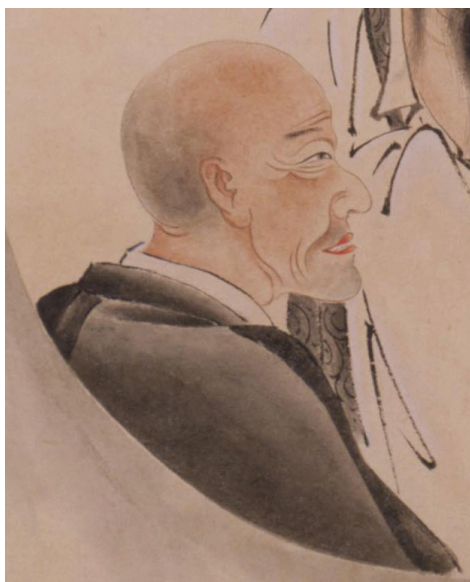


Figure 7. Top: Kutsuki Masatsuna. Bottom: Illustration of RISM in *Seiyō senpu*.



Coins were Masatsuna's avocation and passion.⁵⁰ In an era and in a country with few numismatists, Masatsuna put together a collection of over 9,000 coins, many of which are now housed in the British Museum.⁵¹ In addition to collecting coins, Masatsuna wrote four numismatic books, the third of which was *Seiyō senpu*, which contains the earliest known image of a RISM. How Masatsuna came into possession of a RISM during the Tokugawa shogunate is not known for certain, but it is highly likely that it came to him as a gift from his friend Isaac Titsingh. After Titsingh left Japan in 1784, the two men corresponded until Masatsuna's death in 1802. In 1785, Masatsuna wrote a letter in Dutch to Titsingh thanking him for sending "a casket containing 100 silver and other coins"⁵² and requesting more foreign coins. Even though it was highly illegal to ship specie outside of Japan, the next year Masatsuna sent Titsingh coins, including some rare Japanese gold and silver pieces. This was no doubt done in the hope that Titsingh would reciprocate with a similar gift. It was not until 1788 that Titsingh was again able to send his friend coins, but by that time *Seiyō senpu* had already been published. Based on an examination of the correspondence between Masatsuna and Titsingh, along with other information, it is believed that Masatsuna obtained the ship medal illustrated in his book from Titsingh's 1785 casket of coins.⁵³

It has been suggested by John Kleeberg that the RISM was struck in Holland and that this is proven in part by its appearance in Masatsuna book.⁵⁴ The logic being that since Japan was a closed society that only traded with the Dutch, the medal must have originated from contact with the Dutch. This assumes, of course, that Titsingh only provided his friend with Dutch coins. The evidence, however, is to the contrary. The correspondence between the two men shows that Masatsuna was interested in coins from all nations and that Titsingh pro-

50. Timon Screech, "Kutsuki Masatsuna—A Life," *Catalogue of the Japanese Coin Collection (pre-Meiji) at the British Museum: with special reference to Kutsuki Masatsuna* (British Museum Research, Pub. 174, 2010), p. 37.

51. A search of the British Museum's database reveals that Masatsuna's RISM is not currently in the British Museum's collection.

52. Screech, "Kutsuki Masatsuna—A Life," p. 39.

53. Only one trading ship a year arrived from the Dutch East India Company to Japan.

54. Private correspondence with John Kleeberg, Jan. 29, 2018. This correspondence was precipitated by a communication between David Bowers and John Kleeberg published in Bowers' book *Colonial and Early American Coins* wherein Mr. Kleeberg states that it is his opinion that "[a] Dutch source is actually likelier than an English source." Kleeberg's opinion was based on the RISM's appearance in Masatsuna book and the fact that the Dutch had a supply of metallic zinc from Asia that could have been used to produce the RISM. To be clear, Kleeberg's opinion did not rest entirely on the fact the RISM appears in Masatsuna's book. Moreover, as discussed later, Kleeberg's opinion that the Dutch had access to metallic zinc from Asia is correct.

vided him with a wide-range of foreign coins. This fact is further established by an examination of *Seiyō senpu*.⁵⁵ For sure, the book is heavily weighted towards Dutch coins and medals, most probably because they were what was most available to Masatsuna, but it also contains images of silver and copper coins and medals from other European nations including many from England. Indeed, the specimen appearing on the page immediately preceding the page with the RISM is an Admiral Vernon medal.⁵⁶ This demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt that Masatsuna's interests extended beyond Dutch coins and that he had access to coins and medals from many European nations including England, despite living in a closed society that only traded with the Dutch. Therefore, it does not logically follow that just because a medal was included in *Seiyō senpu*, it was struck or circulated in Holland. Furthermore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that a high-ranking officer of the Dutch East India Company could, with little effort, obtain just about any coin or medal he wanted regardless of where in the world it was struck or circulated.

What then does the fact that the RISM first appeared in an 18th-century Japanese numismatic book tell us? First, it helps date the medal to before 1787 when the book was published and most likely before 1785 when it was probably shipped to Japan by Titsingh.⁵⁷ Thus, there is no reason to doubt the 1779 date on the medal. Second, it provides some circumstantial evidence that the RISM originated in Holland, but it does not prove this point beyond all doubt.

S. Leiden and J. Luchtman's 1838 periodical *Tijdschrift voor Algemeene Munt- en Penningkunde, Uitgegeven door P.O. van der Chijs. Eerste Deel.* (*Journal of General Coin and Penny Expertise*, published by P. O. Van Der Chijs. First part.)

55. In August 2018, John Kleeberg and the author examined all the images of numismatic items in *Seiyō senpu* in order to determine what additional information might be gleaned. Most of the European specimens were from the mid-17th or early 18th century, but not all. Later items of interest included a 1782 Portuguese/Brazilian 6,400 reis (a "joe") from Rio de Janeiro and a 1785 Gelderland (a province of the Netherlands) 2 stuiver—the only item dated 1785. No items were dated after 1785. The book includes many coins minted by the Dutch East India Company, plus a 1784-dated rupee minted at Colombo in Sri Lanka (Ceylon), one of the VOC's important holdings.

56. Examination of the image by John Adams confirms it is an Adams-Chao Cav 2-B. Private correspondence with Mr. Adams, February 2, 2018.

57. The outward voyage from the Netherlands to Batavia (modern day Jakarta) took an average of 246 days between 1770 and 1789. Additional time would need to be added for the journey from Jakarta to Japan. J. R. Bruijn, F. S. Gaastra, *et al*, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Vol. 1, (The Hague, 1987), Table 12, p. 74.

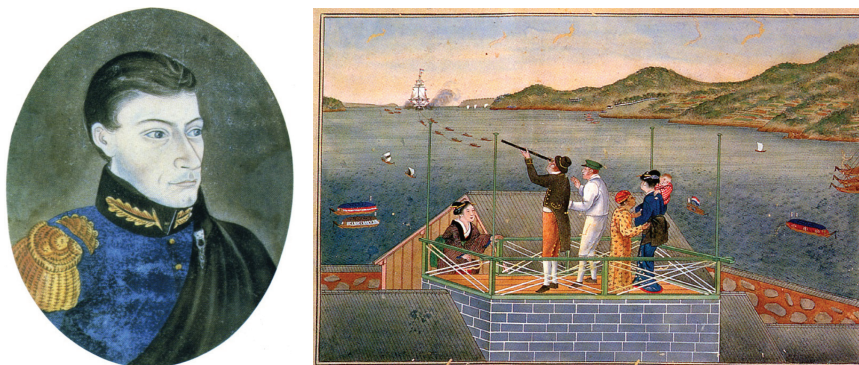


Figure 8. Left: Portrait of Philipp Franz von Siebold. Right: Siebold (holding telescope) with his wife and daughter watching arrival of Dutch East India ship as it is towed into Nagasaki Harbor. Both images painted by Kawahara Keiga in the 1820s.

The Dutch publication *Tijdschrift voor Algemeene Munt- en Penningkunde* contains the earliest known reference to the RISM in Western numismatic literature.⁵⁸ On page 237 of the 1838 issue, in a section titled “Announcements and Reviews,” is a description of Philipp Franz von Siebold’s discoveries in Japan. One of Siebold’s important discoveries, according to the Dutch numismatic journal, was Kutsuki Masatsuna’s book *Notes on Western Coinage*,⁵⁹ which Siebold erroneously attributed to a member of the Japanese royal family. This was really a rediscovery since Isaac Titsingh was well aware of the book 50 years before.

Siebold was a German-born physician who entered Dutch military service in 1822 and was assigned in 1823 to Nagasaki, Japan, with the Dutch East India Company. Siebold immersed himself in Japanese culture to the point where he married a Japanese woman with whom he had a child (Fig. 8). Best known for his study of Japanese flora and fauna, Siebold fled Japan after maps of the northern part of the country were discovered among his personal effects resulting in accusations of high treason. Having narrowly escaped death, he returned to Holland in 1830 and published a book in 1832 titled *Nippon*. Each coin depicted in Masatsuna’s book is described by Siebold with added commentary by the Dutch numismatic journal’s editors. Coin number 138 is the Admiral Vernon medal

58. This reference was located by Julia Casey and shared with the author. Her help in locating this item is greatly appreciated and credit for discovering it should be given entirely to her. This is the first time this information has been published in America. The translation of the information was performed by the author.

59. The book is not identified by name, but the context of the article makes it clear that it is *Seiyō senpu*.

and 139 is the ship medal illustrated by Masatsuna. The description for piece 139 reads:

N°. 139 gedachtenispenning van het verdrijven der Noord-Amerikanen van Rhode-eiland door den Engelschen Admiraal Howe.

Beide deze laatste penningen komen dikwerf voor, en zijn, gelijk den liefhebbers bekend is, van zeer slecht maaksel.

N°. 139 remembrance medal of the driving away of the North Americans from Rhode Island by the English Admiral Howe.

Both these last tokens are common, and are, as collectors are aware, of very bad workmanship.

While the first sentence is merely a description of the RISM illustrated by Masatsuna, the second sentence is commentary by the editor of the Dutch numismatic publication indicating that both the Admiral Vernon medal and the Rhode Island ship medal were common in Holland in the 1830s. This is further evidence that the RISM originated in Holland.

1841 Gift to The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

The first time the RISM is known to this author to have been mentioned in an American publication was in an article appearing in the October 6, 1841 issue of the *United States Commercial and Statistical Register*. The article states that James S. Farmer presented a medal to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Fig. 9).⁶⁰ According to the story, the medal was “struck by the British Government on the occasion of the evacuation of Rhode Island by the Americans and distributed among the Dutch sailors in the English fleet.” The story goes on to describe the “curious relic,” which is clearly an RISM, as “brass, 2 inches and two-tenths in diameter and is utterly without merit as a work of art. It is pierced with a hole in the centre (*sic*) and was thus by means of a ribbon attached to the jacket of the

60. The description of the relic’s Dutch wording and images makes it clear that it is a RISM; however, the size of the medal—“2 inches and two-tenths in diameter”—is twice as large as any known RISM. The diameter of the RISM is approximately 32 mm or 1-1/4 inches. According to conversation with the staff at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, all of that institution’s physical objects other than books and papers were sent to the Philadelphia History Museum in the 1990s. Based on communication with Kristen Froehlich, Director of the Collection and Exhibits at the Philadelphia History Museum, a search of the museum’s collection was unable to locate the item. She further stated that “[s]ince it is directly related to the history of Rhode Island, it is entirely possible that it was deaccessioned sometime after 1841.” Private e-mail correspondence with Kristen Froehlich April 23, 2018.

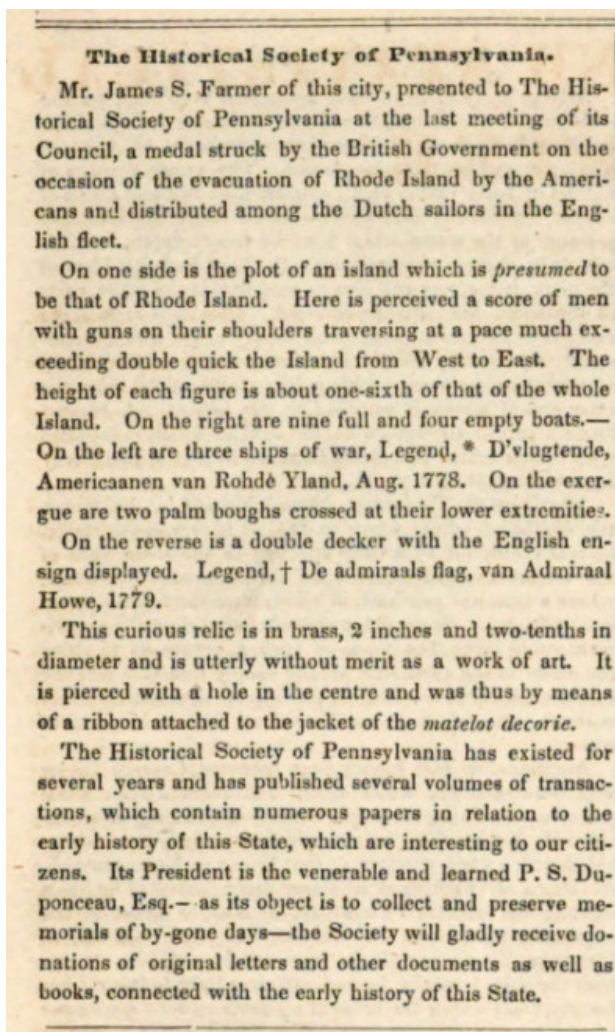


Figure 9. October 6, 1841, article from the *United States Commercial and Statistical Register*.

matalot decorie.” This new information has never been addressed in the numismatic literature; therefore, it merits a full examination to determine if the ship medal was a military decoration presented to Dutch sailors.

The *Commercial and Statistical Register* article does not describe how Mr. Farmer came into possession of the relic or set out the source of the information ascribing its origin to England. We are blessed that James S. Farmer’s middle initial was provided because it makes it possible to determine who he was. Based on the combined genealogical research efforts of the author and Julia H. Casey, the identity of the donor was determined to be James Sidney Farmer.⁶¹ According to the 1841 Philadelphia City Directory, he worked at the “Bank U.S.” and lived at 130 Catharine Street. The “Bank U.S.” would have been the Second Bank of the United States, which was effectively defunded by Andrew Jackson in 1833 and expired in 1836 before being rechartered under Pennsylvania law and closing for good in 1841. It is possible that James S. Farmer came across a ship medal while working at the bank and merely guessed as to its origin, but it is also possible there is much more to this story.

James Sidney Farmer was born in London around 1795 and immigrated to America as a young man. He was a communicant at Trinity Episcopal Church in Philadelphia with his wife, Anna Katrina Elizabeth Lingeman.⁶² Anna and James had at least one son, James Sawyer Farmer, born 1827, who attended the University of Pennsylvania and became an accountant. After James Sidney Farmer died suddenly in October 1850, Anna moved in with her son. According to the 1870 U.S. Census, Anna was born in “Holland.” When she died in Philadelphia on January 6, 1875, her death certificate further specified her place of birth as “Amsterdam, Holland.”⁶³ This leads to the additional possibility that the relic belonged to Anna and was brought to America from Amsterdam along with the family story as to its origin. All this, of course, is speculation, but it is fact that James S. Farmer worked at the Second Bank of the United States of Pennsylvania, his wife, Anna Farmer, née Lingeman, was born in Amsterdam, and the couple came into possession of an RISM sometime before October 1841, which they donated.

Was the RISM a military award presented by the English Royal Navy to Dutch sailors who served with Admiral Howe’s squadron in 1778? After all, the

61. I am indebted to Julia H. Casey for her assistance in tracking down information on James S. Farmer.

62. This is the Dutch spelling of her name. Anna sometimes went by the Anglican version of Katrina: Catherine.

63. On the 1880 Federal Census, which used an expanded form that asked more detailed questions including the place of birth of your parents, James Sawyer Farmer listed his mother’s place of birth as “Amsterdam” and his father’s place of birth as London.

only ship medal recovered from an official excavation was found in Amsterdam, Anna Farmer's place of birth, and has holes in it meaning that it, too, could have been worn as a decorative ornament, like a military medal. This theory would seem at first blush to be more plausible than Michael Hodder's English propaganda piece theory, but, like Hodder's theory, it is not true. Both sides of the argument are presented below for the reader's consideration.

Argument that the RISM was a Military Decoration or Award

The RISM as a military decoration or award to Dutch sailors explains both the perceived English origin of the medal and the Dutch/English legend. Dutch sailors serving onboard English warships would have at least a basic understanding of English to include the word "flag." Based on genealogical research, it is believed that Anna's father was born in 1760 in Germany and moved to Amsterdam; thus, he was of a prime age to have served in the English Royal Navy and could have been the original source of both the medal and the story. Moreover, Anna's age and place of birth means she could have obtained information about the RISM, if not from her father, than directly or indirectly from other veterans of the conflict. The poorly executed design of the medal and its inexpensive construction are consistent with what one would expect from a token of appreciation handed out to foreign sailors. The different metals used—brass, pewter, and silvered brass, could be the result of awards presented to sailors of different ranks—able-body seamen receiving brass medals and higher-ranking sailors and officers receiving pewter or silvered medals, which is known to have been done in other cases in England.

Argument that the RISM was not a Military Decoration or Award

The RISM is not a military decoration. Although records are not available for the exact percentage of foreign-born sailors in the English Navy in 1778, records are available for the later part of the century. These records show, for example, that of the 13,000 men who served on 33 ships taking part in the famous Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, 1,260 were born outside of Britain and Ireland.⁶⁴ These foreign-born men came from 20 European countries and America, with Americans making up the largest group of over 175 sailors. Dutch sailors made up only a small percentage of the foreign-born crewmen. Other data show that from 1793 to 1815 seamen serving on vessels stationed farthest away from England includ-

64. Chris Pleasance, "England expects every foreign man to do his duty: How Nelson relied on more than 1,000 overseas-born sailors at the Battle of Trafalgar," *The Daily Mail*, April 16, 2018.

ed a higher percentage of foreign-born sailors—up to 14.03%.⁶⁵ These data also show that once again Americans made up the largest portion of deckhands born outside of England and Ireland followed “by natives of what today is Germany, West Indians, Swedes, Danes and Norwegians, Dutchmen, Portuguese and East Indians.”⁶⁶ While this information is not from the American Revolutionary War period, it is helpful in understanding the general make-up of England’s naval crews and does show that Dutch citizens served onboard English warships; although not in large numbers.

Richard Howe’s naval squadron at the Battle of Rhode Island was less than a third the size of Horatio Nelson’s at Trafalgar. The English warships involved in the Battle of Rhode Island were based out of New York City, an area with a high percentage of persons of Dutch ancestry. Additionally, the Dutch and English enjoyed close relations prior to the American Revolution; therefore, it can be assumed that a higher percentage of Dutch citizens served during this period than at the Battle of Trafalgar. As such, a high estimate of Dutch-born sailors on Admiral Howe’s ships would be around 160. It has been suggested that between 400 and 600 RISMs can be found today.⁶⁷ Although the estimated number seems high to this author, it is generally agreed that the extant of RISMs exceeds 160. Taking into consideration normal loss over time, the total number minted would have far exceeded the number of Dutch sailors who participated in the Battle of Rhode Island, thus indicating they were minted for a different purpose.

The pewter RISM found in the Amsterdam privy and the RISM donated in 1841 to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania are holed. Coin dealer Jeff Rock, who has handled many RISMs over the past few decades, recalls seeing other holed specimens, but believes they are very rare.⁶⁸ An examination of auction records and images from Heritage and Stack’s Bowers Galleries reveals only one holed specimen sold by either auction house in the last 25 years (Fig. 10).⁶⁹ There was a brass holed RISM in the 1999 C4 Sale, Lot 110, which was described as “[n]eatly done for suspension at the top of the ship’s mast.” Unfortunately, it was not illustrated, but there is a holed Type 5 specimen in the British National Maritime Museum that can be viewed on the internet and a holed Type 2 in the

65. 616 out of 4,392 were born outside Britain or Ireland.

66. Sara Caputo, “Foreign sailors in Nelson’s Navy: a forgotten story,” *Economic History Society*, April 10, 2018.

67. Jaeger and Bowers, *100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens*. Heritage Auctions has estimated the current population from between 300 to 500. See, Heritage Auctions, 2–6, Aug. 2017, Lot No. 3819. I believe the current population of all types is closer to 300 worldwide.

68. Conversation with Jeff Rock, April 2018.

69. Stack’s Bowers Galleries, August 2018 ANA Auction, Lot 182 (a holed Type 5).



Figure 10. Holed Type 5 RISM.

American Numismatic Society's collection.⁷⁰ The vast majority of RISMs, however, grade AU or better and have no holes. If the RISM was awarded to sailors who wore it on their person suspended from a chain or ribbon through a hole in the medal, a high percentage of holed specimens would be expected. Also, if the RISM was distributed to Dutch sailors serving with Admiral Howe in the Battle of Rhode Island, some should have been discovered in and around New York City, where those sailors and marines were stationed. Instead, all the evidence points to Amsterdam as the location with the highest concentration of ship medals, with none known to have been found in America.

If the English government, as claimed, minted the RISM as an award to Dutch sailors, the Admiralty should have a record of it, but none exists. The king did, however, after Admiral Howe's glorious victory over the French on June 1, 1794, personally present him with a "diamond-hilted sword, valued at three

70. The Type 2 ANS example can be found at: <http://numismatics.org/collection/1912.104.3> The British National Maritime Museum in London has two RISM in its collection. One, a Type 5, has a hole at 12 o'clock on the top of the reverse. See, <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/37959.html> Interestingly, the British National Maritime Museum list the "place made" for this item as "Netherlands" and classifies it as a "counter." Object ID: MEC0519. However, the Maritime Museum lists the other RISM in its collection, a Type 2 ship medal made of brass, as being made in "England." Object ID: MEC0518. The fact that the British National Maritime Museum has conflicting information regarding the origin of the RISM is a testament to its mysterious nature. The Museum Rotterdam has a Type 2 specimen in its collection, but does not speculate as to its origin. <https://museumrotterdam.nl/collectie/item/57187> Object ID: 57187. The *Musée royal de Mariemont* in Brussels, Belgium has a RISM which it lists as a "jeton." http://www.musee-mariemont.be/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=o&g=o&hash=5boe81b44e7c9dc734637a33d70ba0a9c93509e6&file=fileadmin/sites/muma/upload/muma_super_editor/muma_editor/images/EXPO/2015_07_Lever_1_encre/GUIDE-LLE-LIGHT.pdf.

thousand guineas, and a massive gold chain, to which afterwards was attached a medal.”⁷¹ This event is well documented, but there is no record of George III awarding any decorations to naval officers or crewmen for action against Continental forces during the American Revolution.⁷² Moreover, during the reign of King George III, neither Parliament nor the Admiralty awarded any military medals or decorations to persons serving in the Royal Navy below the rank of post-captain.⁷³ Medals received by captains were smaller in size than those awarded to admirals, but exactly the same design—admirals wore their medal attached to a gold chain presented by the king, while ship captains wore their medal suspended from a small ribbon and a gold buckle with swivel between the third and fourth buttonholes of their uniform coats.⁷⁴ The English government under George III was simply not in the habit of awarding medals of any type to low ranking crewmembers.

Even after the Battle of Trafalgar, perhaps England’s greatest naval triumph, the Admiralty did not award medals to junior officers, seamen, or marines serving with the fleet. Of interest, however, is the fact that Mathew Boulton, of the Soho Works near Birmingham, sought permission from the government, which was granted, to present a medal at his own expense to every man who served with the British fleet during the Battle of Trafalgar (Fig. 11).^{75, 76} This medal was struck in silver for captains and pewter for the junior officers and men, with some specimens struck in bronze as proofs—none were struck in brass, but some are known with a silver-like wash over pewter.⁷⁷ The rim of these medals contains the legend “To the Heroes of Trafalgar from M Boulton.” It is recorded that many seamen upon receipt of the pewter medal returned it immediately “or threw it overboard in disgust.”⁷⁸

71. Long, *Medals of the British Navy*, p. 35.

72. See generally, George Tancred, *Historical Record of Medals and Honorary Distinctions conferred on The British Navy, Army & Auxiliary Forces, from the earliest period*, (Spink & Son, London, 1891). It should be noted that a Capt. Ewing of the Royal Marines was awarded a medal by order of King George III and £300 for his gallantry at the Battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775. *Ibid.*, p. 48. No other special medals are recorded. See also, John H. Mayo, *Medals and decorations of the British Army and Navy*, Vol 1 (Archibald Constable & Co., London, 1897).

73. *Ibid.*, p. 36. Awards were given to two Lieutenants who commanded warships in their captains’ absence.

74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

76. Image courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.

77. Long, *Medals of the British Navy*, p. 44.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 46.



Figure 11. Battle of Trafalgar medal privately produced by Matthew Boulton for the heroes of Trafalgar.



Figure 12. Official Dutch medal with original ribbon awarded to officers who served at 1781 Battle of Dogger Bank.

The Dutch also ignored common sailors during this period when it came time to award military medals. After the Battle of Dogger Bank on August 5, 1781, which was at best a draw for the Dutch but viewed as a victory, the Prince of Orange awarded participating officers a gold medal for valor suspended from an orange ribbon with a white stripe in the center. The medal was worn over the heart. Midshipmen and non-commissioned officers were awarded an identical silver medal. No medals were struck in copper, brass, or pewter, and no medals were awarded to able seaman or deckhands. This 36 × 28.6 mm oval-shaped medal, which was the first military medal awarded by the Dutch Republic, was engraved by Johann H. Schepp and looks nothing like the RISM (Fig. 12).⁷⁹ Like Boulton's Trafalgar medal, information relating to the manufacture and presentation of the Dogger Bank medal is easily obtainable.

If, as the 1841 article states, the RISM was produced by the English government and awarded to Dutch sailors who served on ships participating in the Battle of Rhode Island, it is an unprecedented and unrecorded event. It seems highly unlikely that the British Admiralty would award low-ranking foreign sailors a medal and ignore native-born sons. If the English government was so stingy with military medals that after the Battle of Trafalgar a private citizen had to produce them for common sailors at his personal expense, there is absolutely no reason whatsoever to believe the British Navy singled out a group of foreign-born sailors to receive an award after the Battle of Rhode Island, which, as discussed in greater detail below, was not viewed as a military victory in London. Finally, it is highly doubtful Lord North's administration would commission a medal in 1779 that honored Admiral Howe who was a vocal opponent of Lord North and his ministers at the time. Therefore, it is this author's opinion that the military award story was concocted in 1841 to explain the unusual relic with a hole in it presented by James S. Farmer to the Pennsylvania Historical Society.

George Folsom's 1853 Letter

In 2002, Michael Hodder published an article in the *C4 Newsletter* titled "More on the Rhode Island Ship Token."⁸⁰ In the short piece, he described the discovery of a letter authored by the United States Chargé-d'Affaires to the Netherlands, George Folsom, while conducting research in the New-York Historical Society. Writing from The Hague on February 8, 1853, to the librarian of the society, Folsom enclosed "a curious copper coin or medal" provided to him by "Lieut. Netscher of the Dutch Army," who received it from a soldier "somewhere in the

79. Image courtesy Stack's Bowers Galleries, November 2016, Lot 59.

80. Michael Hodder, "More on the Rhode Island Ship Medal," *C4N*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer 2002, p. 16.



Figure 13. Type 2 RISM sent to New-York Historical Society in 1853 by the United States Chargé-d’Affaires to the Netherlands, George Folsom.

neighborhood of this place.” The description of the medal makes it clear it is a RISM. In Folsom’s letter, which was reprinted as part of the 2002 article, Folsom expressed his opinion that the relic was made in England to boast of their victory and shared with the Dutch since the popular feeling there “was so decidedly in favor of our country.” While the New-York Historical Society still had Folsom’s letter in 2002, the ship medal that accompanied it could not be located.

In researching the present article, the RISM mentioned in Folsom’s 1853 letter was discovered in the New-York Historical Society’s collection (Fig. 13). An examination of the specimen shows it is a Type 2. Why the Historical Society could not locate it for Hodder in 2002 is a bit of a mystery since it was wrapped in paper with a hand-written note in black ink stating “Medal/to be sent to the/ N.Y. Hist. Soc.Y/in the name of/Lieut. Netscher.” The society’s curator lists the medal as “holed,” but it is not. Rather, it appears to have rim damage at roughly 11 o’clock on the obverse that does not continue to the other side.

Hodder was of the view that “Folsom’s suggestion that these tokens were made to gain some advantage for the British in the Netherlands tallies with my suspicion that they were made as propaganda pieces.” In Hodder’s opinion, “[t]hey clearly depict a British victory, one that came at a time when, as Folsom points out, the British had little to crow about.” As such, Hodder concluded, the piece “was an unsuccessful British propaganda piece made for the Netherlands market in 1780”⁸¹ the purpose of which was “to influence the Dutch against joining the Treaty of Armed Neutrality.”⁸²

81. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

This opinion as to the medal's origin represented a shift in Hodder's thinking over time. When he first examined the ship medal as part of the Norweb Collection in 1987, he stated it "appears to have been struck in England very close to the date appearing on the obverse of the piece, 1779."⁸³ He further argued that the medal was struck by the English "in an attempt to persuade the Dutch to remain neutral and nonbelligerent during the American Revolutionary War."⁸⁴ It is unclear why, other than the need to fit his theory concerning the Treaty of Armed Neutrality, he later determined the 1779-dated medal was struck in 1780. Indeed, in all his writing on this subject, Hodder never made any effort to explain why the year 1779 appears on the medal if that is not when it was minted and issued. The 1987 Norweb catalog and the 2002 *C4N* article represent the bookends of Hodder's writings on this topic. At no point in between did he explain why he abandoned his initial position that the piece was designed to keep the Dutch from helping the Americans to one where its purpose was to convince them to not join the League of Armed Neutrality. Hodder's theory that the RISM originated in England as a propaganda piece to dissuade the Dutch from signing the Russian sponsored Treaty of Armed Neutrality in 1780 is dissected later in this article.

Charles Ira Bushnell's 1860 notes in *Memoirs of Samuel Smith a Soldier of the Revolution, 1776-1786*

Charles I. Bushnell is well known for his numismatic contributions including his posthumously published 1882 book *American Coins and Medals* and his 1858 study of tokens.⁸⁵ Much of Bushnell's research was incorporated by Sylvester S. Crosby into his 1875 numismatic classic *Early Coins of America*. In his obituary, Bushnell was described as having a "knowledge in relation to early American Colonial Coins [that was] unsurpassed, if indeed, it was equaled by that of any numismatist in America...."⁸⁶ Although both Crosby and Bushnell included the Rhode Island ship medal in their private collections, neither discussed it in their numismatic books. Bushnell, however, did illustrate a ship medal in 1860 as part of the *Memoirs of Samuel Smith a Soldier of the Revolution, 1776-1786*,⁸⁷ which

83. Bowers and Merena, "The Norweb Collection, Part 1," Oct. 12-13, 1987, p. 368.

84. *Ibid.*

85. Charles Ira Bushnell's date of death is often incorrectly listed as 1883; however, he died on Sept. 17, 1880.

86. *American Journal of Numismatics and Bulletin of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society*, Vol. XV, No. 3, Jan., 1881, p. 72.

87. Charles I. Bushnell, ed., *Memoirs of Samuel Smith a Soldier of the Revolution, 1776-1786* (Private Printing, New York, 1860).

he edited and annotated.⁸⁸ After a description of the Battle of Rhode Island and the American escape, Bushnell includes an image of the medal, stating “[i]n commemoration of this masterly Bunker Hill retreat, a medal was struck in Holland, of about one inch and a half inch diameter.... This medal, which is rarely met with, is interesting, aside from its American character, as showing the state of fleeing and sympathy for the American cause at that time among the nations of Europe.”⁸⁹ Charles Bushnell was a serious researcher of both the American Revolution and tokens—we owe him a debt of gratitude for his many contributions to colonial numismatics. As such, his opinion on this subject, particularly as it was untainted by the views of others, should be given great weight.

**Frederic Muller’s 1862 supplement *Beschrijving van Nederlandandsche Historie-Penningen. Zevende Stuk*
 (“Description of Dutch Historic Medals, Seventh Part”)**

In 1862, Frederic Muller published his supplement to Gerard Van Loon’s important study of Dutch medals. Medal 537 of Muller’s update is the Rhode Island ship medal. Muller not only illustrated and described the ship medal, but also commented on it, speculating as to its origin. He wrote that “[a]lthough the penny has Dutch writing, the spelling and machining⁹⁰ indicate an English or English-American origin.”⁹¹ It appears that Muller was unaware of the rare Type 1 version of the ship medal with “*vlugtende*” on the reverse. His speculation that the medal’s wording and machining were not Dutch merits serious consideration as Dutch was Muller’s native language and he was an expert on Dutch coins and medals. He was, however, at a loss to explain why the Battle of Rhode Island was depicted on the medal but did indicate that he was aware the rebels and English were trying to garner sympathy for their cause in Holland during the war. Unfortunately, Muller did not elaborate on the basis of his opinions—he did not explain which word(s) he found unusual or what it was about the design or machining that caused him to believe it was English or American. It is generally presumed that Muller found the word “*vlugtende*” out of character; however,

88. From the illustration it cannot be determined if it is a Type 4 or Type 5 ship medal. The sale of Bushnell’s collection after his death included two RISMs; an uncirculated brass Type 4 and an uncirculated pewter Type 5. Messrs. Bang & Co, “Catalogue of the Celebrated and Valuable Collection of American Coins and Medals of the late Charles I. Bushnell, Esq. of New York,” catalogued by S. H. & H Chapman, June 20–24, 1882, Lots 1606 (brass RISM) and 1607 (pewter RISM).

89. *Memoirs of Samuel Smith*, pp. 38–39.

90. Some have translated this word as “design,” but I believe that within the context of the sentence my translation is more accurate.

91. Frederic Muller, *Beschrijving van Nederlandandsche Historie-Penningen. Zevende Stuk* (Amsterdam, 1862), p. 127.

he could just as easily have been referring to the English word “flag.” In any case, since the problems were not specified, we are only left to speculate as to Muller’s reasoning.

Although Muller’s 1862 work provides his most extensive coverage of the RISM, it was not the first time he mentioned it. Sixteen years before, in 1846, he published the *Catalogus van het Penning- En Muntkabinet nagelaten door den wel-endelen heer P. Smidt Van Gelder, to Zaandam. Tweede Deel* (“Catalog of the Penny and Coin Cabinet left behind by Mr. P. Smidt Van Gelder of Zaandam. Second Part”).⁹² The RISM was part of Van Gelder’s collection arranged by Muller. Although the catalog had sections for coins and medals from foreign countries, the ship medal was not listed with English coins and medals, but with medals of famous persons arranged alphabetically under “H” for “Howe.” That the RISM was part of Van Gelder’s collection is further proof that it was widely known and collected by Dutch numismatists in the early to mid-19th century, long before it became popular in America.

American Journal of Numismatics and Bulletin of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society, Vol. II, No. 6, New York, October 1867

The first true analysis of the RISM in an American numismatic publication was in the *American Journal of Numismatics and Bulletin of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society* in October 1867. The article was prompted by a letter to the editor dated August 17, 1866, by a subscriber who asked “Dear Sir—Can you give me some information as to the history of the Rhode Island medal?”⁹³ After recapping Muller and Bushnell’s comments, Professor Charles E. Anthon, the editor of the *AJN*, wrote “[w]e had always considered the Rhode Island Medal as a production of Dutch sympathizers with the British Tory party in its attempt to reduce the colonies to subjection, until we read the opposite opinion, in the work of Mr. Bushnell.”⁹⁴ Taking a position contrary to Bushnell, Professor Anthon went on to argue that “the whole design has an air so anti-American, the British ship is so conspicuous on the obverse, in the place of honor, and the soldiers who are about to take to their boats, and are called “*vlugtende*”—flying, not retreating—are made to look so ludicrous and forlorn, that

92. This work was published in Amsterdam. The RISM is briefly described on p. 371 and listed as item number 7016. Thanks to Julia Casey for locating this catalog and sharing the information with me.

93. *American Journal of Numismatics and Bulletin of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society*, Vol. I, No. 5, New York, Sept., 1866, p. 40.

94. *American Journal of Numismatics and Bulletin of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society*, Vol. II, No. 6, New York, Oct. 1867, p. 54.

we can hardly give up our original impression.”⁹⁵ Then, hedging his bets, Anthon wrote “[t]he Medal was perhaps the work of some Mr. Facing-Both-Ways among the die-sinkers of that day in Holland; and his object being merely profit, as the Dutch account suggests, he may have chosen the retreat from Rhode Island as an event agreeable to both parties, to those who favored the mother-country, as well as those whose hearts were with the insurgents.”⁹⁶

Professor Anthon’s article goes on to describe what he calls “one of the curious incidents of the Coin-trade in America.” That is the June 21 and 22, 1864, auction of George F. Seavey’s coin collection.⁹⁷ In that sale a brass RISM described as “rather poor” was “bought for the absurd price of \$40.00.”⁹⁸ Based on information provided to Anthon by W. Elliot Woodward, who cataloged the sale, the cause of the extraordinary price was that “two unlimited orders had been given for its purchase.”⁹⁹ According to Woodward, after the 1864 auction, a gentleman named John King went to “Holland” and “found no less than fifteen specimens in various metals.”¹⁰⁰ Consequently, Woodward explains, “the Medal appeared simultaneously in various places, and the market thus became overstocked. I think however that to-day there are scarcely twenty-five specimens in America, and the Medal is really more rare (*sic*) than it is thought to be.”¹⁰¹ At this point, the two page article abruptly ends.

Although written over 150 years ago, Professor Anthon’s article is one of the most informative pieces ever written on the RISM. It shows that almost from the very beginning of its appearance in America there was confusion and disagreement regarding its meaning and origin. More important, Anthon explains that the ship medal was once very rare in this country and a collector went to Holland after it became valuable in the United States and brought back 15 of the then 25 known specimens. This helps show that the ship medal never circulated in this country, and points instead to Holland.

W. Elliot Woodward’s comment that the market became saturated with ship medals is borne out by auction records from the period showing a steady decline in prices after the first offering. In Woodward’s Fifth Annual Sale, held between October 18 and 22, 1864, only four months after the sale of George F. Seavey’s collection, three different varieties of RISM were offered: Lot 1910, described as

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*

97. Bangs, Merwin & Co., Auction of the collection of George F. Seavey, June 21 and 22, 1864, Lot 50.

98. *American Journal of Numismatics*, Oct. 1867, p. 54. By way of comparison, a New England Shilling sold for \$15, Lot 404.

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*

“by far the finest Rhode Island medal ever offered at public sale in this country,” sold for \$18; Lot 1911, which was described as being in tin, but was almost certainly pewter (this is the first confirmed auction sale of a pewter specimen) sold for \$6.50; and Lot 1912, which hammered for \$15, was described as brass with “scroll-work” under the ship on the reverse.¹⁰² The next year Woodward sold another ship medal for \$13.50.¹⁰³ The famous Seavey RISM that brought \$40 in June 1864 was resold in January 1876 for only \$1.50.¹⁰⁴ By the 1880s, high grade ship medals regularly sold for under \$1.00. This demonstrates that the supply of these medals quickly caught up to demand as a result of imports from Holland.

George T. Paine’s October 25, 1867, letter published in the *American Journal of Numismatics and Bulletin of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society*, Vol. II, No. 8, New York, Dec. 1867

Two months after Professor Anthon’s article, a letter appeared in the *AJN* addressing the initial article’s conclusions and adding additional information concerning the different types of Rhode Island ship medals. George T. Paine, a member and leading light of the Rhode Island Numismatic Association, wrote in support of Bushnell’s theory that the medal was actually pro-American. Paine owned a complete set of three different brass ship medals including the first recorded mention of a medal with the word “*vlugtende*” on the reverse.¹⁰⁵ It was Paine’s opinion that *vlugtende* was placed on the medal in acknowledgement of the fact that the British abandoned Narragansett Bay on October 25, 1779. That he actually possessed this extremely rare medal was confirmed by a report of the Rhode Island Numismatic Association where it was noted that George Paine displayed three different Rhode Island ship medals at the November 18, 1867 meeting.¹⁰⁶

Paine wrote that two of his three medals were imported by Mr. King in the summer of 1865. The other, he stated, had been in his collection for some time. It is unfortunate that he did not specify if the *vlugtende* reverse medal was one of

102. W. Elliot Woodward, *Catalogue of American Coins, Medals, Etc.*, (Fifth Semi-Annual Sale) Oct. 18 to 22, 1864, p. 104.

103. W. Elliot Woodward, *Catalogue of American Coins, Medals, Etc.*, (Seventh Semi-Annual Sale) Dec. 19, 1865, p. 72. Two other were sold at Woodward’s March, 1865 sale, but the sale prices are not known.

104. Bangs, Merwin & Co., Auction, catalogued by Edward Cogan, Jan. 24–28, 1876, Lot 1609 (The description reads: “Rhode Island Medal. In Brass. Poor, but scarce, and cost the owner \$40”). The price realized of \$1.50 is hand-written in the margin of the catalog found on the Newman Portal.

105. *American Journal of Numismatics and Bulletin of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society*, Vol. II, No. 8, New York, Dec. 1867, p. 80.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

the two that came from King; however, he did indicate that W. Elliot Woodward had examined his Type 1 medal and had never seen another like it.

Paine's short letter has had a lasting impact on numismatic scholarship. Although his overall view that the medal is pro-American is not currently widely-accepted, his sentence that the reverse of the medal was intended to depict the British evacuation of Narragansett Bay in 1779 has morphed into today's accepted, but incorrect, interpretation that the reverse shows Admiral Howe's departure from Rhode Island in 1779. As will be shown in greater detail in the section dealing with the history of the Battle of Rhode Island, the historical facts do not match up with this interpretation as Howe had nothing to do with the 1779 British evacuation of Newport.

C. Wyllys Betts' 1894 *American Colonial History Illustrated by Contemporary Medals*

The RISM was next discussed and illustrated by C. Wyllys Betts in his posthumously published work on medals that tell the story of colonial America. According to Betts, there were three different varieties of ship medals: 1) with *vlugtende* on the reverse—Betts No. 561, 2) with *vlugtende* removed from reverse—Betts No. 562, and 3) with scroll work substituted for *vlugtende* on the reverse—Betts No. 563.

In a footnote on pages 255 and 256, Betts summarizes the numismatic history of the RISM, but makes an error that has been brought forward to today. Betts stated that the medal "was almost unknown to American collectors, until an impression was sold in Woodward's Fifth Semi-Annual Sale, June 21, 22 (Seavey collection), 1864, for the remarkable price of \$40, the result of two unlimited bids having been sent to dealers."¹⁰⁷ Woodward's Fifth Semi-Annual Sale occurred in New York between October 18 and 22, 1864, so the medal in question was not sold at that sale. As shown above, the sale was actually Bangs, Merwin & Company's auction of the collection of George F. Seavey, June 21 and 22, 1864, Lot 50. Although this is an inconsequential error, the fact that no one has bothered to verify the accuracy of Betts' statement in over one hundred and twenty years demonstrates how errors oft repeated in numismatic literature become unchallenged facts.

The drafters of the footnote were also of the opinion that the meaning of the medal may have been intentionally vague in order to appeal to those in Holland who favored England in addition to those who favored America. This overlooks, of course, the very real possibility that a medal designed to appeal to both sides

¹⁰⁷. C. Wyllys Betts, *American Colonial History illustrated by Contemporary Medals*, (Scott Stamp and Coin Co, New York 1894), p. 255, fn. †.

in a conflict might just as easily be rejected by both sides. Betts is highly regarded among numismatic scholars, and for good reason, but the footnote in question was written after C. Wyllys Betts's death by a number of contributors who note in the Editors' Preface:

Should any errors in descriptions or attributions be noticed, we must beg the reader to consider the difficulties of verifying Mr. Betts's descriptions, after the pieces under his inspection, and the authorities which he consulted, had been dispersed; and especially as he had not completed his own final revisions of his work, when his early lamented death put an end to his labors.

While Betts' book is, taken as a whole, superb, the information presented concerning the ship medal seems to have been hastily assembled by the book's editors after Betts' death.

Walter Breen's 1988 *Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*

In 1988, Doubleday published Walter Breen's massive encyclopedia of American coins. During his lifetime, Breen's numismatic scholarship ranged from the brilliant to the not so good. In many ways he advanced colonial numismatics forward by leaps and bounds, but in other instances his incorrect speculative theories, which he masqueraded as facts, brought research to a standstill. This is the case with Breen's entry on what he called "Rhode Island Ship Tokens."¹⁰⁸ The bad outweighs the good in Breen's write-up and it is a leading reason why research into the medal has mostly stalled for the past thirty years.¹⁰⁹

Breen believed there were only three different varieties of the issue—he stated the pewter versions were "trial pieces" and did not include the silvered

108. Walter Breen, *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*, (Doubleday, 1988), pp. 125–26.

109. Breen's research is often tainted today by the reprehensible criminal conduct that eventually landed him in prison in California where he died in 1993. Breen's work, however, should be judged on its own merits. In David Bowers' new book on Vermont Coinage, *The Copper Coins of Vermont and Interrelated Issues—1783–1788*, (Stack's Bowers Galleries, 2018), Bowers presents a very fair assessment of Walter Breen and his contribution to colonial numismatics. With regard to *Breen's Complete Encyclopedia*, Bowers notes that "[m]y company, Bowers and Merena Galleries, sold over 10,000 copies the first year." p. 133. Bowers adds that with over 125 pages on colonial and early American numismatics, Breen's book drew many new collectors to colonial coins. Regarding the quality of the book's scholarship, Bowers notes that "[o]pinions were not presented as such, leading readers to assume that everything in the book had been fact checked. In time, careful study by others revealed that many facts were simply guesses." p. 134.

variety, but did note that Type 4 is occasionally silvered. He further wrote that *vlugtende* was included on the piece “in error,” and that the intended word was *vluchtende*, “fleeing.”

Next, Breen stated that the “garbled Dutch legends have been variously misinterpreted, largely because nobody bothered to look up the events in the Revolution to which the tokens allude.”¹¹⁰ He followed this up with a paragraph summarizing the Battle of Rhode Island that is mostly, but not entirely, accurate. Breen’s historical summary includes only those aspects of the battle that support his interpretation of the medal’s origin and meaning.¹¹¹ Left out of the summary is almost any mention of the land battle depicted on the medal; focusing instead on the naval engagement between the English and French fleets. Breen concludes his historical summary with the false statement that “15 months later, on Oct. 25, 1779, Howe himself had to abandon not Conanicut¹¹² but Rhode Island itself: the event mentioned on the tokens’ ship side.”¹¹³ As shown in greater detail in the historical section of this article, although the British abandoned the Newport garrison in October 1779, the order came from General Clinton, not Admiral Howe. At the time the order to leave Newport was issued, Lord Howe was no longer in command. Breen’s belief that no other numismatic scholar before him bothered to examine the events depicted on the medal is also mistaken. As shown above, Charles Bushnell edited a book on the Revolutionary War and was very familiar with the Battle of Rhode Island and the RISM; not surprisingly, Bushnell and Breen reached different interpretations of the medal and its origin.

Breen’s ultimate conclusion was that the “token” should be read as “The Americans had to run away in 1778; now there goes Adm. Howe the same way in 1779.”¹¹⁴ Breen’s interpretation, as he realized, did not explain “why the sails are furled.” “Howe’s ship,” Breen wrote, “would be going nowhere fast.” This visual inconsistency with his interpretation was explained away as “satire.”¹¹⁵ Left

110. Breen, *Walter Breen’s Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*, p. 125.

111. In all fairness, Breen was limited in the amount of space he had to devote to any single coinage.

112. Several people who edited this work felt this word was misspelled here and elsewhere in this article and that it should be Connecticut or Connonicut, not Conanicut; thus, I feel compelled to clarify. The accepted spelling today is Conanicut. It is the name of the second largest island in Narragansett Bay named for Chief Canonicus of the Narragansett tribe who once inhabited the island and maintained his royal residence there. The 1777 map at Figure 25 spells the name as “Connonicut”, but spelling was not standardized when the map was created.

113. Breen, *Walter Breen’s Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*, p. 125.

114. *Ibid.*

115. *Ibid.* Walter Breen’s argument that the RISM represents “satire” was previously asserted by the cataloger of the Garrett collection. Bowers & Ruddy Galleries Catalog of the Garrett Collection, Part 3, Oct. 1–2, 1980, p. 53. Based on private correspondence with Q.

unanswered is who or what is being mocked by the furled sails and how this satire fit into his explanation of the medal's meaning. Breen's conclusion is incorrect because it was based in part on a flawed and incomplete account of the historical events.

Breen's final two paragraphs are worth mentioning. First, he states that "[j]udging by their preservation, these tokens circulated with other coppers, side by side with the CONSTELLATIO NOVA and various base Birmingham 'Hard Ware,' at a time when anything of suitable size and weight would serve as small change. They come in all grades (rarely mint state), unlike medals, which were not spent." In the final sentence of the paragraph, he contradicts himself by stating that the legends on the pieces "do not suggest local Rhode Island circulation," which is why he placed them in the "Miscellaneous Nonlocal Imports" section of his book.¹¹⁶ It is a little difficult to understand what Breen means by this. Is he stating Rhode Island ship medals circulated in America, but just not in Rhode Island? If so, that is absurd. Breen provides no evidence other than the fact that many show wear to support his circulation theory. No RISM has ever been excavated in America and there is no contemporary document showing they were known here until the 1830s and 1840s when they were presented to American historical societies as curiosities. There is zero support for Breen's unsubstantiated statement that Rhode Island ship medals circulated alongside Nova Constellatio coinage, and, as was his custom, Breen cited nothing to support what is now believed to have been his speculative supposition. Furthermore, Breen is incorrect in his statement that ship medals rarely come in mint state. An examination of auction records shows that mint state examples have frequently appeared at auction in America from the 1870s to today. It is estimated that approximately 33% of the extant RISMs are MS60 or above.

In the last paragraph of his write-up on the ship medal, Breen notes that Providence, Rhode Island, coin dealer Horace M. Grant issued a struck copy in 1936. The Grant copy of a Type 4 is instantly identifiable by the raised initials "HMG" in the waves below Howe's ship (Fig. 14).¹¹⁷ Breen felt the Grant copies were not deceptive; however, he did not take into account the ingenious nature of unscrupulous persons who might seek to deceive others by artificially wearing down a Grant copy to obliterate the initials. Breen also did not include the weight of the Grant copies, which is an easy way to tell them from authentic pieces if the initials have been removed. Grant copies weigh between 204 and 209 grains

David Bowers on April 26, 2018, Bowers was the cataloger of all four parts of the Garrett collection. Specifically, with respect to the medal section of the catalog, Mr. Bowers states that he prepared it with the help of George Fuld—Walter Breen played no part in the sale.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Image from Grant copy in author's collection.



Figure 14. 1936 Horace M. Grant struck copy of Type 4 RISM with enlargement of initials under Howe's ship.

and are normally 32.4 mm in diameter.¹¹⁸ Although the size is within tolerance for an authentic RISM, the weight is too great. The edge on these copies display more of a rough horizontal cut than the vertical grinding and polishing lines found on authentic medals (Fig. 18). There are also some slight differences in the images on the Grant copies compared to authentic pieces; discussed below (Fig. 16). The Grant copies were made by the Robbins Company of Attleboro, Massachusetts. Grant owned a hobby shop at 109 Empire Street in Providence, Rhode Island, and sold the copies at his store where he also distributed 1936 Rhode Island Tercentenary commemorative half dollars. Grant published a small booklet that he distributed along with the copies concerning the history of the RISM.¹¹⁹ According to the booklet, the bronze pieces initially sold for \$1, with a limited number struck in silver for \$2.50. Sales must have been brisk because the silver copies sold out and the price of the remaining bronze strikes was increased to \$2.50—a hefty price in the middle of the Great Depression. Grant copies are collected today in their own right.

In addition to the Grant copies, there are a number of other “copies” not mentioned by Breen available today. Dory Development Corp., a small company

118. In his 1994 fixed price list, Jeff Rock, listed a Grant copy at 203.8 grains, and in 2010 he listed another that weighed 209.2. The copy owned by this author weighs 206 grains. Thus, a range of between 204 and 209 grains is estimated. See, *Rosa Americana, Ltd., Fixed Price List #9*, (Summer 1994), lot 48, priced at \$49; *Rosa Americana, Ltd., Fixed Price List Nineteen*, (Autumn, 2010), p. 44, lot 104, priced at \$79. Rock notes that the Grant restrike is “one of the best ‘restrikes’ of any colonial coin ever produced, and it is one that we still see offered as genuine now and then.”

119. Horace M. Grant, *The Battle of Rhode Island ‘Admiral Howe Medal’* (Horace Grant, pub. 1936).



Figure 15. Holed cast copy of RISM suspended from modern-looking, military-like ribbon.

in Salem, New York, currently manufactures and sells replicas of many colonial coins including the RISM—(Item CA-71). The Dory replica of a Type 4 RISM is not designed to fool collectors and is properly marked “COPY” on the reverse above the ornamental detail. At 88 grains, the Dory piece has the look and feel of an inexpensive replica. Other copies, however, can be found on the internet manufactured by unknown persons who are not as scrupulous as the Dory Corp. These are unmarked as copies and are much more deceptive.

These deceptive counterfeits have been sighted by this author on the internet and at coin shows. These copies are often, but not always, holed and suspended from a ribbon. The attached ribbon is obviously modern. (Figure 15). If these copies were produced after 1973, they violate the Hobby Protection Act.¹²⁰ They are sometimes sold with a fraudulent description that either states or implies they are authentic military awards from the Revolutionary period. The bogus

120. 15 U.S.C. Chap. 49, § 2101, *et seq.* See also, Danielle List, “The Hobby Protection Act’s Safeguards for Colonial Coinage,” *CNL*, Vol. 56, Serial 161, August 2016, p. 4405.



Figure 16. From left to right: Grant copy, Dory replica, cast copy often attached to a ribbon, an authentic Type 4 RISM.

nature of these impressions is apparent to the trained eye. The one in the author's collection is cast, weighs 248 grains, and is 33 mm in diameter. Based on its appearance and feel when not attached to a modern-looking ribbon and holed, this cast copy was manufactured to fool collectors or made with reckless indifference to that consequence. There are, however, several ways they can be identified as spurious—not all of which are listed here. First, as noted above, the weight is too great, the diameter too wide, and the flan too thick. Second, they generally have much more space between the beading and edge than do authentic ship medals, but this varies from piece to piece and is not always a reliable way to identify these fakes

Currently, all known copies of the Rhode Island ship medal share at least one common difference from authentic pieces: The bottom small boat on the copies lines up with and almost touches the “u” in “Aug’t”, while on an authentic RISM the bottom boat lines up with the “A” in “Aug’t” and does not touch any of the letters. Other differences can be seen by comparing the images in Figure 16.

Figure 16 reveals that all known copies of the RISMs share a common origin; most likely derived from a Grant copy. This makes detection much easier as they share the same differences from an authentic piece.¹²¹

121. The earliest mention of the modern cast copy seen by this author was in Jeff Rock's 1999 Fixed Price List where he listed one for \$15. Rock's description states, in part, “A most pleasing CAST copy of this scarce and popular issue. Full, bold legends and design details all surrounded by a full set of denticles on either side.... A most attractive example, with great eye appeal and quite deceptive overall, and unusual to find in cast form since the Grant copies [made in the 20th century] would seem to have filled the need for collectors....” *Rosa Americana, Ltd., Fixed Price List Number Fourteen*, (Summer 1999), p. 21, lot 67. It should be noted that Rock listed the weight at 218.4 grains, 30 grains less than the cast copy in the author's collection.



Figure 17. Mayhugh Type 4 Rhode Island Ship Medal with pewter-like inner core covered by beta brass outer shall.

Various Articles in *The Colonial Newsletter*, *C4 Newsletter*, and *Penny Wise*—A Complete Analysis of The Metallic Content of the RISM

Recent scholarship by Michael Hodder, John Lorenzo, and Marc Mayhugh has focused on the metallic content of the RISM. As noted above, Hodder determined in 1990 that the two Type 1 medals were comprised of brass with very high zinc to copper ratios—approximately 53% copper to 47% zinc.¹²² Further, an analysis of a Type 4 specimen owned by Mayhugh in 2009 showed a similar alloy on the surface covering an inner core of tin.¹²³

In an article published in 2009 in the *C4 Newsletter*, Mayhugh describes his purchase of a ship medal from a German dealer who listed it as a jeton. When the piece arrived Mayhugh was pleased with the appearance of the side depicting the Battle of Rhode Island, but disappointed by the look of the reverse as it “exhibited numerous areas of pitting which showed a white chalky color beneath the brass” (Fig. 17).¹²⁴ An electron dispersive analysis of x-ray (“EDAX”) performed by a professional metallurgist discovered that the surface of Mayhugh’s ship medal was 47.18% zinc, 53.38% copper, and 0.44% iron—consistent with the results obtained by Hodder’s testing of the two Type 1 medals. An analysis of the core of the medal, however, showed the center to be comprised of a pew-

122. Michael Hodder, “The Appleton-Massachusetts Historical Society Rhode Island Ship Token with Vlughtende,” *CNL*, Serial No. 84, Vol. 30, No. 1, March 1990.

123. Marc Mayhugh, “A Puzzling Copy of the Rhode Island Ship Medal,” *C4N*, Vol 17, No. 2, Summer 2009, p. 18.

124. *Ibid.* Mayhugh did not include the weight of his RISM in his article, but it was weighed on April 24, 2018, by this author and determined to be 172 grains; well within the range of weights for an authentic RISM.

ter-like substance.¹²⁵ Without conducting destructive testing or specific gravity testing on a statistically significant number of Rhode Island ship medals it is impossible to know if Mayhugh's results are an anomaly or the rule. It is assumed, however, that the Mayhugh medal is not unique and that other brass specimens may also have a pewter-like inner core surrounded by a brass outer layer, which may explain the wildly varying weights of medals that are the same size.

The most significant development of the post-Breen era with respect to the RISM is the discovery of its metallic content. This scientific breakthrough led to research into the zinc used in the production of the ship medal. In 1998, Hodder summed up his opinion of the origin of the RISM when he stated it "was not struck in Holland for several reasons, one being the fact that the Dutch could not refine zinc pure enough in 1779 to have made the tokens. Since only one or two small English firms could, an English origin for the token is necessary."¹²⁶ John Lorenzo, working in collaboration with Hodder, investigated the meaning of the high zinc brass alloy. Initially, Lorenzo was of the opinion that the RISM was a "product of Holland."¹²⁷ Within a year after beginning his research, however, his attitude shifted and he became a disciple of Hodder's English propaganda piece theory.¹²⁸ The cause of this shift in opinion was the composition of the brass used to make the medal and his research into the history of zinc refining techniques in England. Lorenzo, like Hodder, believed that the "remarkably high zinc content was far higher than anything achievable outside England in 1779."¹²⁹ Over the next few years Lorenzo cultivated this theory, culminating in a 1997 article in which he credited Matthew Boulton's Soho Mint for the manufacture of the ship medal.¹³⁰ Lorenzo's speculation that Boulton struck the RISM has justifiably received no traction in the numismatic community.¹³¹ However,

125. Pewter is an alloy of 85–99% tin, mixed with copper, antimony, bismuth, and sometimes lead. It should be noted that in the article Mayhugh stated that he believed his medal was an electrotpe; however, during conversations with him in March 2018, he indicated that his opinion had changed and he now believes it is authentic. The Mayhugh medal shows very significant wear that has rubbed away the brass surface on the high points.

126. Michael Hodder, (Letter to the Editor) "The Rhode Island Ship Token Revised," *CNL*, Spring 1998, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 10.

127. John Lorenzo, "The Rhode Island Ship Token of 1779: A Non-Local Import," *Penny-Wise*, 3/15/1993, Vol. 27, No. 2 (155), p. 76.

128. John Lorenzo, "The Rhode Island Ship Token of 1779: A Non-Local Import, Revisited" *Penny-Wise*, 1/15/1994, Vol. 28, No. 1 (160), p. 8.

129. *Ibid*, p. 9.

130. John Lorenzo, "The Rhode Island Ship Medal and Matthew Boulton," *C4N*, Fall, 1997, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 25. Lorenzo is correct that Champion's patent could not have been used to create the RISM because it could not produce brass with a zinc content over 34%.

131. Lorenzo's article invites the reader to compare Boulton's early medals with the RISM. It is suggested that such an examination will lead to the conclusion that Boulton's

the portion of his research on the history of zinc refining and brass production in Europe and the conclusions derived from this research have largely, although not entirely,¹³² been accepted by numismatists; therefore, this aspect of Lorenzo's research will be scrutinized as it is at the heart of the current belief that the RISM was minted in England.

Zinc has a low melting point of 419° C, and vaporizes at 907° C. Because of this volatility early European metallurgists had difficulty refining it to its metallic state and alloying it with copper, which has a melting point of 1,085° C; well above the point at which zinc vaporizes and is lost.¹³³ Lorenzo studied the history of zinc refining techniques to determine when and where high zinc content brass was first produced in Europe. The more technical aspects of Lorenzo's research will not be repeated, but the short answer to the question, according to Lorenzo, is that the ship medal was "probably" made using a zinc refining process invented and patented in England by James Emerson based on the earlier research and discoveries of Bristol metallurgist Nehemiah Champion and his sons John and William. It was Emerson's process, Lorenzo argues, "that led to the copper/zinc composition of the Appelton-MHS and Garrett-Roper-Adams specimens."¹³⁴ Consequently, "Emerson's patent . . . was responsible for the Rhode Island Ship Medals."¹³⁵ At first blush, Lorenzo's research appears very scientific in its approach and presents a compelling case for an English origin of the ship medal based on English zinc refining patents.

The flaws in Lorenzo's research and conclusions are numerous. Some problems are apparent from just a casual reading of the article while others require

early medals are similar to the RISM. The article does not illustrate any similar Boulton medals or otherwise identify those believed to be similar; that task is left to the reader. Although this is a subjective exercise, I purchased Sim Comfort's new book, *Matthew Boulton's Naval Medals* (London, 2017) and compared Boulton's medals to the RISM. None, in my opinion, were similar or even close to the RISM. I found Boulton's medals to be of a much higher quality, a different size, and to have an overall different appearance. Just to make sure I was not alone in this opinion, I located Sim Comfort's contact information and sent a message to him in London along with an image of a RISM and asked if he had seen any medals produced by Matthew Boulton that he thought look similar to the RISM. On May 2, 2018, Mr. Comfort emailed me back to say, "[m]y own view is that the RISM isn't Boulton, the style just doesn't look like his work." Additionally, Comfort forwarded my question to Soho Mint expert David Vice in Birmingham, England. On May 17, 2018, Mr. Vice responded to me stating "I can confirm your Rhode Island medal was definitely not struck at Soho."

132. See, e.g., Letter to the Editor by David Kass, *C4N*, Winter 1997, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 9–10.

133. Donald L. Fennimore, *Metalworking in early America: Copper and its Alloys from the Winterthur Collection*, (Balding + Mansell, England, 1996), p. 19.

134. Lorenzo, "The Rhode Island Ship Medal and Matthew Boulton," p. 29.

135. *Ibid.*

an in-depth analysis. One matter that Lorenzo made no effort to explain is how James Emerson's English patent No. 1297, which was issued on July 13, 1781,¹³⁶ was used to mint the ship medal in 1779.¹³⁷ Moreover, it is unclear if Emerson's patented process could even produce brass with a zinc content over 47%. Lorenzo glosses over this by stating that "historical records do not provide the copper zinc ratio obtained" by Emerson's patented process.¹³⁸ This is a glaring deficiency considering the whole point of his study was to find a historical process that could obtain a brass alloy consistent with the known composition of the RISM. Furthermore, Lorenzo only cites one source for all his information on zinc refining and brass production and an examination of that solitary publication shows that its author did not examine any numismatic items and never claimed England was the only place where high zinc brass could be manufactured in 1779.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, if it is true that England was the only place in Europe in 1779 where high zinc brass could be manufactured, it logically follows that the RISM was struck there and exported to Holland as a propaganda piece. But, is Lorenzo and Hodder's opinion supported by the historical record? An examination of the evidence shows it is not. First, high zinc brass was produced in Europe prior to 1779 without locally refined zinc by importing metallic zinc from Asia. Second, the zinc refining processes patented by Emerson was known in Holland and the rest of Europe 100 years before zinc refining patents were issued in England.

**High zinc brass could be manufactured in Europe before 1779 by using
metallic brass imported from Asia.**

Michael Mitchiner's multi-volume series on European jetons, medalets and tokens is by far the most authoritative source for information on the metallic content of European numismatic items. Volume II, printed in 1991, titled *Jetons, Medalets & Tokens: The Low Countries and France*, has a chapter covering the metallic content of Dutch, French, and English coinage, jetons, and medalets.

¹³⁶ Bennet Woodcroft, *Subject-Matter Index of Patents of Inventions, from March 2, 1617 (14 James I.), to October 1, 1852 (16 Victoria)*, Part I-(A. to M.), (Eyre & Spottiswoode, Holborn 1857), p. 444.

¹³⁷ It is theoretically possible that Emerson used his special process to refine zinc to make brass years prior to the award of the patent, but that is speculation.

¹³⁸ Lorenzo, "The Rhode Island Ship Medal and Matthew Boulton," p. 29.

¹³⁹ Lorenzo's source was Joan Day's article, "Brass and Zinc in Europe from the Middle Ages until the Nineteenth Century," which appeared as part of the British Museum's Occasional Paper, No. 50 (1990), titled *2000 Years of Zinc and Brass*, edited by P. T. Craddock. The early version cited by Lorenzo was revised in 1998 and reissued. The updated edition includes new articles showing brass and metallic zinc production in other parts of the world, particularly India, hundreds of years before Emerson's patent was issued.

Neither Hodder nor Lorenzo referenced this work in their studies. Using the same scientific process employed by Hodder and Mayhugh to determine the metallic content of the RISM, Mitchiner examined hundreds of European numismatic items, scientific instruments, and other brass objects manufactured between 1550 and 1914 and discovered several with a zinc content over 35% that were produced prior to 1780.¹⁴⁰ Such a high zinc percentage is indicative of a specialized zinc refining process like those patented in England by Champion and Emerson. Out of the hundreds of brass specimens examined by Mitchiner, only one numismatic item struck before 1780 had a zinc content greater than its copper component and that was a forgery of a French Louis XVI gold coin dated 1779. Although it was a counterfeit French coin, it was discovered in London and may have been minted there by French refugees.¹⁴¹ Mitchiner notes that a planchet made from an alloy containing such a high zinc content would be “brittle” making “it quite unsuitable for striking with a die.”¹⁴²

Mitchiner did not test every coin, jeton, and medal produced in Europe, but he did examine a statistically significant percentage.¹⁴³ One coinage not covered by Mitchiner was the Rosa Americana coinage of William Wood. In 2011, the Colonial Coin Collectors Club published Sydney Martin’s authoritative book on the series, *The Rosa Americana Coinage of William Wood*.¹⁴⁴ In his book, Martin presents a comprehensive history of the Rosa Americana coinage issued between 1722 and 1723. Appendix G of the book contains an extremely thorough metallurgical analysis of the Rosa Americana coinage revealing that it contains an average copper to zinc ratio of 53% copper to 46% zinc, which is substantially the same as the RISM.¹⁴⁵ Interestingly, although Hodder did not have access to the metallic content of the Rosa Americana coinage, he noted as far back as 1987 that the RISM may be “an artifact of a similar manufacturing process” as the Rosa Americana.¹⁴⁶ How did Wood produce brass with a high zinc content prior to the publication of William Champion’s zinc refining patent issued in 1738 or Emerson’s patent in 1781? Martin theorizes that Wood prepared brass using a process similar to Champion’s to achieve an alloy with approximately 33% zinc and into this mixture he added metallic zinc imported from Asia; thus, raising

140. Michael Mitchiner, *Jetons, Medalets & Tokens: The Low Countries and France*, Vol. II, (Hawkins Pub., London/Bombay 1991), p. 741.

141. *Ibid.*, p. 748.

142. *Ibid.*

143. The study Mitchiner participated in examined over 600 jetons, coins, and medals, including approximately 300 from Nuremberg, 160 from England, and 100 from France.

144. Sydney Martin, *The Rosa Americana Coinage of William Wood*, (C4, 2011).

145. *Ibid.*, p. 42, Table 3-1.

146. Bowers and Merena, “The Norweb Collection, Part 1,” Oct. 12–13, 1987, p. 368.

the zinc content to 46%.¹⁴⁷ Because metallic zinc refined in India was regularly imported by the Dutch East India Company, anyone in England or Continental Europe in 1779 could produce high zinc content brass in the same way as Wood did fifty-seven years before. This proves that the later English zinc refining patents studied by Lorenzo are irrelevant to an analysis of the RISM.

**The zinc refining processes patented in England were well known
in Holland prior to 1779.**

Even though high zinc brass could have been produced using imported metallic zinc in 1779, the evidence also shows the brass alloy used to produce the RISM could have been manufactured in Holland with locally refined zinc. The secrets of zinc refining outlined in Champion and Emerson's patents were known in Holland prior to 1779. The Dutch East India Company began importing metallic zinc to Europe in the 17th century and once it became available on a large scale people began to discover its properties.¹⁴⁸ The German chemist Johann Glauber revealed the secrets of high zinc brass in his book *De Prosperitate Germanias*, published in Amsterdam in 1656. Glauber's process, like Champion's, however, could only attain brass with a zinc content of up to 37%. A method of further refining zinc was contemporaneously discovered by Prince Rupert of the Rhine¹⁴⁹ who later shared this knowledge with Glauber. Prince Rupert's zinc refining process, which could produce brass with a zinc content over 47%, was known in Holland before 1682.¹⁵⁰ These facts were recently confirmed by English chemists who, based upon an examination of hundreds of European jetons, deduced that "the improvements to the calamine process patented in England were known on the Continent some 100 years earlier."¹⁵¹

147. Martin, *The Rosa Americana Coinage*, p. 42.

148. Mitchiner, *Jetons, Medalets & Tokens: The Low Countries and France*, p. 731.

149. Prince Rupert was born in Prague in 1619 and went to England in 1639 to support his cousin, King Charles I. He left England in 1646, accompanying Prince Charles II to Holland in 1648, where he lived for a period of time, returning to England at the Restoration in 1660 and dying there in 1682. A form of brass containing 75% copper and 25% zinc is commonly known as Prince's Metal or Prince Rupert's Metal—this alloy should not be confused with the alloy invented by Prince Rupert that contained over 50% zinc.

150. Michael Mitchiner, *Jetons, Medalets & Tokens: The Low Countries and France*, Vol. II, (Hawkins Pub., London/Bombay 1991), p. 731; See also, M. B. Mitchiner, C. Mortimer, and A.M. Pollard, "The Chemical Compositions of English Seventeenth-Century Base Metal Coins and Tokens," *British Numismatic Journal*, 1985, pp. 155-156. The secret of zinc refining to obtain brass with over 47% zinc was also known to Johann Joachim Becher, a German alchemist who died in London in 1682.

151. Mark Pollard, *Archaeological Chemistry*, (The Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, 3rd ed. 2017), p. 268.

Further studies by archeologists working along the India-Pakistani border demonstrate that the technological processes patented in England to refine zinc had been known on the Indian subcontinent since the twelfth century. It is believed that the Portuguese may have gained this knowledge from locals in the Zwara area of India and brought it to Europe where it was disseminated.¹⁵² Thus, to the extent high quality zinc refining was a “secret,” it was poorly kept; multiple studies shows it was known throughout Europe and Asia long before the English patents were issued. Moreover, to the extent high quality zinc refining remained a mystery to anyone in Europe, the Dutch East India Company stood ready to supply metallic zinc directly from Asia.

One final point should be made here concerning 18th century English patents. In 1779 there was no international patent and trademark law. International conventions and treaties covering patents were not organized until the 20th century. As such, an English patent on a mechanical, chemical, or metallurgical process or device, could not be enforced outside that nation’s borders; therefore, the fact that an Englishman obtained a patent for a process that might have yielded a brass alloy containing between 46 to 51% zinc in no way means that Dutch, French, or German manufacturers were prohibited from using the exact same technique. Analysis of jetons shows the Dutch and English exchanged brass technology and that this exchange often occurred years prior to the publication of these advances.¹⁵³

Lorenzo and Hodder’s opinion that England was the only place in Europe where high zinc brass like that found in the RISM could be manufactured in 1779 is incorrect. High quality zinc could be refined on Continental Europe prior to 1779 or imported from Asia to make Beta Brass. Therefore, to the extent this is a foundational premise in the argument that the ship medal is an English propaganda piece, it is fallacious. This does not, however, disprove the theory that the RISM is an English propaganda piece; just that the part of the argument that states it could have *only* been manufactured in England is unfounded.

New x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy data on seven additional RISMs.

Brass numismatic items very rarely contain a percentage of zinc greater than 37%, and it is virtually unheard of to find anything over 46%. This is because the crystalline structure of brass changes when the zinc content is raised above 37%. Anything over 37% has a duplex (alpha plus beta) nature, and when the zinc content reaches 46% it takes on the properties of zinc rather than copper

152. J. S. Kharakwal and L. K. Gurjar, “Zinc and Brass in Archaeological Perspective,” *Ancient Asia: Journal of the Society of South Asia Archaeology* (Dec. 2006), pp. 139–59.

153. M. B. Mitchiner, C. Mortimer, and A. M. Pollard, “The Chemical Compositions of English Seventeenth-Century Base Metal Coins and Tokens,” *British Numismatic Journal*, 1985, p. 163.

resulting in severe hardening and brittleness. Brass with a zinc content over 46% is known as “Beta Brass.”¹⁵⁴ At the high zinc levels discovered in the RISM, the alloy loses malleability and has little strength. Beta Brass must be worked hot, it cannot be die struck at ambient temperatures.¹⁵⁵ The ideal hot-working temperature range for high zinc content brass is as it cools to between 750°C/1,382°F and 650°C/1,202°F.¹⁵⁶ The difficulties of working with small round metal objects at these temperatures are enormous; explaining why coins, medals, and jetons are not generally made of Beta Brass and why the extreme upper limit of zinc in modern commercial brass is 40%.

Based upon the rarity of the RISM and the high but fluctuating percentages of zinc in the brass alloy used in its manufacture, the RISM was not minted in large quantities nor was it produced using exacting metallurgical standards or quality control. This belief is reinforced by the fact that the first group minted contained an error (the word *vlugtende* on the reverse) that had to be physically removed. Also, the fluctuating weights and sizes of the medals points to an unsophisticated production process. This suggests a small-scale private manufacturer rather than a large government sponsored operation.

The difficulties of hot-working Beta Brass into medals are so great that it brings Hodder and Mayhugh’s test results into question. Prior to today, the results of only three metallurgical tests on brass ship medals have been published—the two brass Type 1 pieces tested by Hodder in 1990, and Mayhugh’s brass Type 4 specimen tested in 2009. Test results from just three brass RISMs is a thin reed upon which to build an elaborate numismatic theory; particularly given that Hodder’s results are now over 25 years-old and Mayhugh initially thought his ship medal was a counterfeit. It is for this reason that new tests were performed on seven different RISMs in order to determine if Hodder and Mayhugh’s results could be replicated and to discover if any new information could be gleaned.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (“CWF”) has four RISMs in its collection, plus an x-ray diffraction machine, and a trained operator.¹⁵⁷ On April 16, 2018, the CWF tested all of its ship medals and an additional privately-owned specimen. On July 25, 2018, with the help of Ray Williams, two more privately-

154. Mitchiner, *Jetons, Medalets & Tokens: The Low Countries and France*, p. 732.

155. John W. Adams and Fernando Chao, *Medallic Portraits of Admiral Vernon*, (Kolbe & Fanning, Gahanna, OH, 2010), p. 202 (“When the proportion of zinc exceeds 50%, the alloy is too hard and brittle for cold-working”); See also, Sydney Martin, *The Rosa Americana Coinage of William Wood*, (C4, 2011), p. 454 (“beta brass cannot be worked cold; rather, it must be heated to a significant level before it can be forged or die struck”).

156. Y. V. R. K. Prasas and S. Sasidhara, eds., *Hot-working Guide: A Compendium of Processing Maps*, (ASM Int’l, 1997), p. 236.

157. The operator was Kristen Travers Moffitt, Conservator & Materials Analyst at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. I am very grateful to Kristen for her work on this project and her time in responding to my many questions concerning the results and explaining to me how XRF works and its limitations.

owned RISMs were tested at a separate Pennsylvania facility. The new testing performed by CWF was more robust than Hodder and Mayhugh's testing in that it included metals not previously searched for, while the testing performed at the Pennsylvania facility was not as comprehensive. Both the obverse and reverse of each of the CWF medals were tested, but only one side in the Pennsylvania tests. Below is a summary of the data from all the new testing. The abbreviations used can be found in footnote 158.¹⁵⁸

Test Results

CWF RISM Medal 1—a high grade Type 6 (possibly finest known):

O = Ag 0.5%; Cu 53.46%; Zn 45.77%; Fe 0.35%; Pb 1.70%; Sn 0.12%; Sb 0.0%

R = Ag 0.0%; Cu 52.15%; Zn 47.56%; Fe 0.31%; Pb 1.64%; Sn 0.14%; Sb 0.0%

CWF RISM Medal 2—listed in the CWF collection as “copper,” but actually a brass Type 2:

O = Ag 0.01%; Cu 52.94%; Zn 46.73%; Fe 0.32%; Pb 1.90%; Sn 0.07%; Sb 0.0%

R = Ag 0.00%; Cu 52.58%; Zn 46.95%; Fe 0.37%; Pb 1.91%; Sn 0.11%; Sb 0.0%

CWF RISM Medal 3, listed as “Brass, with wreath,” Type 4:

O = Ag 0.0%; Cu 52.94%; Zn 46.74%; Fe 0.32%; Pb 1.90%; Sn 0.0%; Sb 0.0%

R = Ag 0.0%; Cu 52.24%; Zn 47.59%; Fe 0.29%; Pb 1.77%; Sn 0.1%; Sb 0.0%

CWF RISM Medal 4, listed as “White metal, with wreath,” a very high grade Type 5:

O = Ag 0.0%; Cu Error; Zn 1.87%; Fe 0.0%; Pb 3.5%; Sn Error; Sb 23.47%

R = Ag 0.0%; Cu Error; Zn 0.96%; Fe 0.1%; Pb 3.2%; Sn Error; Sb 23.52%

POM#1 RISM Medal 5, tested by CWF, low grade Type 6:

O = Ag 1.67%; Cu 52.68%; Zn 46.26%; Fe 0.30%; Pb 1.43%; Sn 0.14%; Sb 0.1%

R = Ag 1.05%; Cu 52.61%; Zn 46.68%; Fe 0.32%; Pb 1.44%; Sn 0.12%; Sb 0.0%

POM#2 RISM Medal 6 (Gladfelter), tested by PA facility, Type 4

Results = Cu 51%; Zn 46%; Pb 1.8%; trace amounts of Fe, Sn, and Cd.

¹⁵⁸ CWF = Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; O = Obverse; R = Reverse; Ag = Silver; Cd = Cadmium; Cu = Copper; Fe = Iron; Pb = Lead; Sb = Antimony; Sn = Tin; Zn = Zinc; POM = Privately Owned Medal.

POM#3, RISM Medal 7 (Williams), tested by PA facility, Type 4
Results = Cu 45%; Zn 52%; Pb 2.2%; trace amounts of Fe, Sn, and Cd.

Analysis of Test Results

CWF RISM Medal 1: This is high grade silvered brass RISM that shows much less wear than other known Type 6 examples. The results for this medal were unexpected. Based on its physical appearance, it was anticipated there would be a much higher silver content. Other than the silver content, the rest of the results for Medal 1 are consistent with Hodder’s testing of the two Type 1 RISMs and Mayhugh’s results, i.e., it is Beta Brass. Thus, it can be determined that Medal 1 is an authentic RISM that has been silvered. With only two test results for Type 6 RISMs (CWF Medals 1 and 5), it is difficult to draw too many conclusions, but the unusual appearance of Medal 1 and the different metallic composition of its coating compared with the results for Medal 5, leads to the possibility that Medal 1 was coated by a different process and at a different time than the other known Type 6 ship medals; however, more testing on Type 6 RISMs must be conducted before this hypothesis can be verified.

CWF RISM Medal 2: The results for this Type 2 ship medal show it is made from Beta Brass and that the composition of the brass alloy is substantially similar to that of the Mayhugh medal and Hodder’s results for the Adams and Appleton-MHS specimens:

CWF MISM 2	
Obverse:	Cu 52.94%; Zn 46.73%; Fe 0.32%
Reverse:	Cu 52.58%; Zn 46.95%; Fe 0.37%
Mayhugh Type 2:	Cu 53.38%; Zn 47.18%; Fe 0.44%
Adams Type 1:	Cu 45.79%; Zn 51.88%; Fe 2.33%
Appleton-MHS Type 1	Cu 53.08%; Zn 46.03%; Fe 0.89%

Considering that Type 2 is made from Type 1 by removing *vlugtende* from the reverse, this result is not unexpected. It should also be noted that the CWF listed Medal 2 in their collection as “copper.” The test results clearly demonstrate it is brass. This further supports the belief that those RISMs listed as copper are actually brass. This author believes there are no copper RISMs.

CWF RISM Medal 3: The results from Medal 3, a Type 4 ship medal, show it is made from Beta Brass and that the composition of the brass alloy is also substantially similar to that of the Mayhugh, Adams, and Appleton-MHS specimens.

CWF RISM Medal 4: Medal 4 is a Type 5 pewter ship medal. Because the XRF machine was calibrated for brass, it resulted in an error for the pewter metal concentrations found in Medal 4, which were outside the machine's calibration range. The error for copper was because it was too low, and the tin readings were unexpectedly high. Pewter is an alloy traditionally consisting of tin and copper.

POM#1 RISM Medal 5: This is a Type 6 ship medal. The owner of this medal obtained it from John Ford. Both Ford and the owner believed it to be a counterfeit because of the silvering and its unusual edge—the edge does not demonstrate the same degree of roughness found on other RISMs and is rounded like the pewter medal Eric Newman believed was spurious in 1978. XRF testing demonstrates that this medal is authentic. Although it could still be a forgery, that possibility seems remote considering it is made from Beta Brass with roughly the same percentages of zinc and copper as authenticated specimens. The owner of this ship medal, like Mr. Ford and Marc Mayhugh, is a sophisticated collector. The fact that all these men were mistaken about the authenticity of ship medals in their private collections leaves open the possibility that there are other authentic RISMs hiding in collections that are mistakenly believed to be counterfeits. The American Numismatic Society (ANS) has several RISMs in its collection, three of which are listed as either a “cast” or “electrotype.” One or more of these is believed by this author to be authentic, but, unfortunately, we may never know because ANS has refused to permit any of the medals in its collection to be tested.

POM#2 RISM Medal 6: This Type 4 ship medal is owned by David Gladfelter who kindly provided it to us so that testing could be performed. The results from the testing on this ship medal are not surprising. The results further confirm a standard Beta Brass alloy of approximately 46% zinc and 51% copper.

POM#3, RISM Medal 7: This Type 4 ship medal is owned by Ray Williams, who coordinated the testing of Medals 6 and 7. The test results from Ray's ship medal are interesting in that they show a very high zinc content. The results line up with the brass composition of the Adams Type 1 now owned by Sydney Martin. This helps confirm the authenticity of the Adams-Martin Type piece, which prior to these new test results was the only known RISM with a zinc content over 50%:

Ray Williams Type 4 = Cu 45%; Zn 52%.

Adams-Martin Type 1 = Cu 45.79%; Zn 51.88%

The new testing confirms that the Rhode Island ship medal was manufactured from Beta Brass, which, according to today's engineering and metalworking literature, must be hot-worked or cast. The RISM does not appear to have been cast, although it is possible it was struck from a cast planchet like the Rosa Americana coinage.¹⁵⁹ Experts consulted for this article universally agree that it is a struck piece. In order to die-strike the ship medal, it had to be heated to very high temperatures and struck while hot. This is different from the annealing process whereby a planchet is heated red hot and then permitted to cool before striking. Beta Brass can only be die struck at temperatures over 1,202°F, making it very difficult to work with.

Final thoughts on the metal used to manufacture the RISM

The chemical composition of the RISM is similar to Muntz Metal or Yellow Metal, which has 60% copper and 40% zinc. Muntz Metal is the brass with the highest zinc content generally produced for industry applications today; however, unlike Beta Brass, Muntz Metal is an alpha-beta brass instead of a pure Beta Brass. Regardless, it has many of the characteristics of Beta Brass and must also be hot-worked. In addition to copper and zinc, Muntz Metal, like the alloy used to create the RISM, has a small percentage of iron, normally around .07%. Muntz Metal was patented in 1832 in England and used in the shipbuilding industry because it was less expensive than other brass alloys after the zinc tariff was dropped in 1830. Muntz Metal also had anti-microbial and corrosive properties ideal for use on oceangoing vessels. Today, however, it is commonly used in architectural projects because it is harder, stronger, and more rigid than other forms of brass. Another quality that makes it appealing to artists and architects is its gold-like color, which is why it is also known as Yellow Metal. This raises the possibility that Beta Brass was used to manufacture the RISM because of its golden appearance. When newly minted, the RISM would have looked very much, if not exactly, like gold.¹⁶⁰ This belief is supported by contemporary literature and to some degree by the forgery of the 1779-dated French gold coin found in London. Obviously, the forgers determined Beta Brass looked enough like gold that it might fool someone into accepting it as an authentic gold coin.

159. Today's literature recommends a much higher lead content for cast brass items—usually between 6 to 8% Pb. The lead amounts found in the RISM are more consistent with hot-worked brass. This modern information, of course, is the result of an additional two hundred years of metallurgy experience and may not reflect what was understood in 1779. See, Joseph Günter, *Copper: Its Trade, Manufacture, Use, and Environmental Status*, (ASM Int'l, Material Park, OH, 1999), p. 72.

160. Attention is drawn to Lot 3675 of Heritage's Sept. 17, 2015 Long Beach Sale, a Type 2 graded MS63 and accurately described as "with substantial yellow-gold luster."

Importantly, in 1777 a book was published in London in which it was specifically stated that “equal parts of copper and zinc mixed together [give] a color to the touch-stone like that of gold.”¹⁶¹ Archeologists studying zinc refining and brass technology in India believe a possible reason why high zinc brass was developed in that region was because of the “golden glitter” it imparted to religious objects.¹⁶² Based on this evidence, it is speculated, that the RISM looked like a gold medal when newly struck. At a minimum, it was unlike anything people had ever seen before. This may have made all the perceived trouble to strike it from Beta Brass worth the effort.

Before moving on from this subject, some additional details not covered by Lorenzo and Hodder regarding the history of brass production need to be addressed. Lorenzo focused on the zinc refining process and patents relating thereto issued in Bristol. Based on these patents, he incorrectly concluded that high zinc brass could only be produced in England in 1779. Another approach would have been to follow the trail of Muntz Brass back in time to see what other forms of brass were used in shipbuilding in Birmingham around 1779.¹⁶³ While today what we call “Muntz Brass” contains 40% zinc, the initial patent application called for 50% zinc and 50% copper. Muntz’s 1832 patent followed an English patent obtained by William Collins in 1800 for “a preparation or application of sundry articles and materials to be used chiefly for the preservation of shipping or marine purposes.” In the second part of Collins’ patent he describes a “yellow sheathing” capable of being “rolled hot” consisting of 100 parts of copper and 80 parts zinc. Nearly twenty years before Collins, another Englishman, James Keir, in 1779, obtained Patent No. 1240 for a brass alloy consisting of approximately 42% zinc that he claimed was capable of being “worked either cold or at a blood-red heat.” Keir was able to do this by adding iron to the mixture

161. Pierre J. Macquer, James Keir, T. Cadell, *A Dictionary of Chemistry: Containing the Theory and Practice of that Science: Its Application to Natural Philosophy, Natural History, Medicine, and Animal Economics*, Vol III (London, 1777), unnumbered pages, Section on Zinc. The authors of this work note the difficulties experience by 18th century metal-workers in handling zinc because of its low boiling point causing some zinc to be burnt and dissipated in fumes during the brass making process. (Zinc boils and vaporizes at 1,665°F, below copper’s melting point of 1,981°F). As a result, “after the mixture is made, the proportion betwixt the two metals is not certain.” This difficulty could explain the fluctuating percentages of copper and zinc discovered in the RISM—no two batches of metal could be expected to be identical. This is consistent with the XRF results on RISMs showing different percentages of the two metals in the brass alloy.

162. J. S. Kharakwal and L. K. Gurjar, “Zinc and Brass in Archaeological Perspective,” *Ancient Asia: Journal of the Society of South Asia Archaeology*, (Dec. 2006), pp. 139–59.

163. Lorenzo focused on brass production and zinc refining in Bristol, England. This is probably because the single cited source from which he drew his information on brass and zinc refining was written by an author from Bristol.

and something unexpected—glass.¹⁶⁴ According to W. C. Aitken in his book *The Early History of Brass and the Brass Manufactures of Birmingham*, Keir's high zinc brass was made by first melting copper and iron and mixing it with charcoal and "pounded glass, and the zinc then added."¹⁶⁵ Did Keir discover a means to cold-work Beta Brass in 1779? According to his patent, he discovered a means to at least cold-work Alpha-Beta Brass. Could the same process, with just a slightly larger percentage of zinc, 46% verse 42%, be used to cold-work Beta Brass?¹⁶⁶ This line of inquiry might have been more fruitful for Lorenzo than the false path he chose to explore.¹⁶⁷ Even then, however, just because the English might have been able to cold-work Beta Brass, it would not have prevented the Dutch from hot-working the alloy to mint the RISM; thus, even this more promising path leads nowhere.

It is clear from all the patent activity that the late 18th century was a period of great experimentation with brass in Birmingham, and, it is surmised, in Amsterdam and elsewhere in Europe. Who discovered what and when they first knew it and if anyone else had the same technology is impossible for us to know today. Finally, even if the secrets of Beta Brass and cold-working the same could be proven to have been the exclusive domain of a select group of men in Birmingham or Bristol, there is no way to be certain that a Dutch ship was not fitted out with a hull covered in this special alloy in Birmingham and the brass later removed in Amsterdam and repurposed into the planchets for the RISM. After extensively researching all these avenues, I am convinced that every path looks promising at first, but only leads to a dead end. The answer to the mysteries of the RISM does not rest in the technology used to produce it; however, this research has not gone unrewarded. From analyzing the RISM we have learned that it is made from a very special brass alloy that when newly struck looked identical to gold and that this special alloy can be used to determine the authenticity of suspected RISM counterfeits. Furthermore, research into the history of zinc refining and brass manufacture in England and Holland has shown that the RISM could have been manufactured in either country either from imported metallic zinc or from locally refined zinc in 1779.

164. The quotations in the above section come from W. H. Maw, ed., "Some Anticipated Inventions," *Engineering: An Illustrated Weekly Journal*, Vol. XIV, London, Oct. 4, 1872, p. 231; See also, Bennet Woodcroft, *Subject-Matter Index of Patents of Inventions, from March 2, 1617 (14 James I.), to October 1, 1852 (16 Victoria)*, Part I-(A. to M.), (Eyre & Spottiswoode, Holborn 1857), p. 444.

165. W. C. Aitken, *The Early History of Brass and the Brass Manufactures of Birmingham* (Martin Billing, Son & Co., Birmingham, 1866), p. 89.

166. The British Navy rejected the use of Keir's brass for naval applications in 1783 because it proved to be "excessively brittle." Michael McCarthy, *Ships' Fastenings* (Texas A&M Press, 2005), p. 105.

167. James Keir was in partnership with Boulton and Watt in 1778.

HOW THE RHODE ISLAND SHIP MEDAL WAS MANUFACTURED

The edges of the RISM are rough and look as if they have been filed/ground. All authentic RISMs demonstrate rough edges with parallel lines. This unusual characteristic of the ship medal, which is indicative of the manner in which it was manufactured, has led to several authentic medals being incorrectly identified as forgeries or electrotypes.

The RISM was most likely struck with a drop hammer rather than a screw press, as were the Rosa Americana coinage using a similar metal. In the 1770s a drop hammer could be operated by one worker whereas a screw press required two or more, though a screw press would be capable of striking more pieces in a given time. Before the advent of steam power, a drop hammer required a water mill or human or animal muscle to drive the operation. It is very doubtful that a collar was placed around the outside edge of the planchet as it was struck. As a result, the edges were very rough and irregular immediately after striking as metal flowed away from the compressed center of the planchet as the images were impressed. It appears that grinders and polishers were used to smooth the edges—these could have been powered by water or a foot-pedal. The use of a grinder requires some degree of skill—just a few seconds on a grinder can eat away lots of metal depending on the grinder's speed and the amount of pressure applied. This, in my opinion, explains the different diameters of the RISM. Types 2 and 3 were most likely produced using a similar grinder to efface the word *vlugtende* from the surface. The smoothness of the area and the bowl-like shape appear to be the result of applying the working edge of a grinder to the metal rather than a hand-held tool like a chisel (Fig. 18). Because humans were conducting this work, human error could be expected, explaining why in some instances *vlugtende* was not entirely erased and partial letters can still be seen on some specimens.

The above process is not without precedent. In 1772, Matthew Boulton manufactured the Otaheite medal, also known as the Resolution and Adventure medal, to be carried by Capt. James Cook on his second exploratory voyage. This medal is mentioned here not because it is believed Boulton had anything to do with the RISM, but because Boulton was a meticulous note taker and most of his writings have been preserved; thus, permitting us a better understanding of his manufacturing process than any of his contemporaries. The Otaheite medal was Boulton's first foray into medal making and occurred before the Soho Mint was operational and prior to Boulton's application of steam power to the coining process. Boulton's manufacturing experience prior to 1772 consisted mostly of making small metal objects like shoe buckles and buttons. He took this knowledge and applied it directly to the manufacture of his first medals. Based on



Figure 18. Type 3 RISM with *vlugtende* removed with a grinder.

Boulton's notes, as well as those of his partner James Watt, we know that Boulton struck the Otaheite medal with a drop hammer with no collar around the planchet. Watt's observations were that "Boulton hand finished buttons with water powered grinders and polishers."¹⁶⁸ English naval medal expert Sim Comfort believes that Boulton had the rim of the Otaheite medal "lightly machined or hand filed to create a round even rim."¹⁶⁹ The manufacturer of the RISM most likely used a very similar process as the rims look the same except Boulton generally rounded his rims more (Fig. 19).

An even better comparison is between the Rosa Americana coinage and the RISM because it, like the ship medal, is made from Beta Brass. Sydney Martin explains that the "inability to control the copper/zinc ratio in the brass, coupled with the inherent variability of the quality of the crude zinc, produced [a metal] that was different batch-to-batch."¹⁷⁰ Based on the differences in the metallic content of the RISMs studied, it appears the same issues were encountered in their manufacture. This partially explains the wide differences seen in the color of ship medals, which often have splotches and swirling yellow colors mixed with copper tones. Because of the hardness imparted by the high zinc content, Martin states that it was necessary that the Rosa planchets be heated prior to striking on a drop press.¹⁷¹ Rosas were also not struck with a collar, which Martin believes explains the "variable diameters occasionally seen" with that coinage.¹⁷² Again, the same issues can be seen with ship medals; pointing once again

168. Sim Comfort, *Matthew Boulton's Naval Medals* (London, 2017), p. 27.

169. *Ibid.*

170. Martin, *The Rosa Americana Coinage*, p. 42.

171. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

172. *Ibid.*

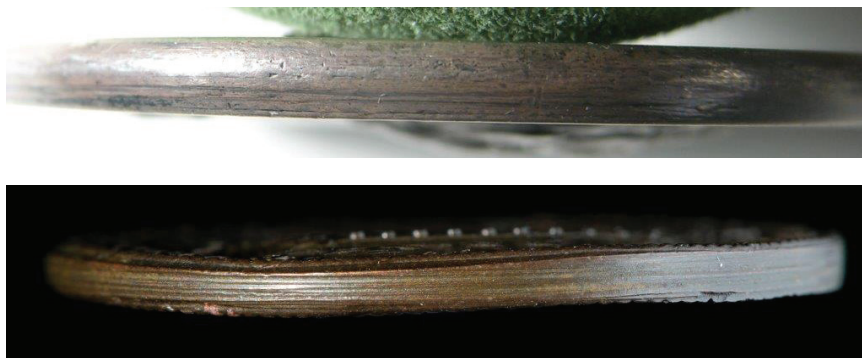


Figure 19. Top: Edge of Type 3 RISM showing horizontal grinding marks. Bottom: Edge of otaheite medal showing horizontal grinding marks—this medal shows a rounder edge than is found on most examples of Rhode Island Ship Medals.

to a similarity in the manufacturing process. Testing performed on Rosas shows they were struck on a cast planchet. According to Martin, an indication Rosas were minted from cast planchets is the fact that the edges had to be dressed in order to remove seams resulting from the casting process. Figure 20 is an image of the edges of a Rosa Americana twopence showing where it was ground and polished resulting in an edge almost identical to that seen on the ship medal.¹⁷³

Based on the similarities in metal and appearance between the RISM and the Rosa Americana coinage, it is believed they were manufactured in the same or in a related manner.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

One thing that Walter Breen was correct about is that in order to fully understand and interpret the RISM, it is absolutely necessary to understand the historical context in which it was issued as well as the Battle of Rhode Island. Many of the interpretations that have been given the RISM make no sense in light of historical facts.

Anglo-Dutch Relations

The head of the Dutch Republic during the American Revolution was William Batavus V, Prince of Orange and Nassau and hereditary stadtholder and governor of the seven United Provinces of the Low Countries. His mother was Anne, Princess Royal and Princess of Orange. She was the second child and eldest

173. This image is Figure G-4 from Martin's book, which he shared for use in this article.

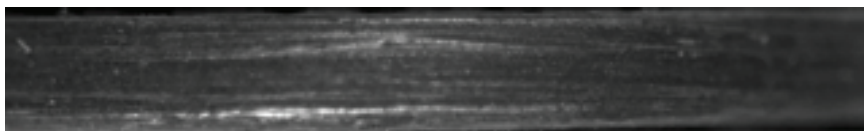


Figure 20. Edge of Rosa America twopence showing horizontal grinding marks similar to those seen on the Rhode Island Ship Medal.

daughter of George II of Great Britain. Her husband, William IV, died in 1751 at which time she became regent of the Netherlands. As regent she exercised extensive powers on behalf of William V. The Dowager Princess Anne was appropriately known as an Anglophile due to her English upbringing and familial relationship to the English royal family; views she passed to her only son, who assumed the throne in 1766 at the age of 18. It was William V's grandfather, William III, who initially established the very close relationship between the House of Orange and the English monarchy.

In 1688, William III, Prince of Orange, overthrew James II of England in what was for the most part a bloodless coup. William III jointly ruled England with his wife Mary II, who was James II's Protestant daughter. As rulers of both the Netherlands and England, William and Mary were able to form a very close union between the two nations. In the long run, however, this relationship proved detrimental to the Dutch Republic as it resulted in a shift from Amsterdam as the center of international trade and commerce to London. Just as important to the future of the Netherlands, William III placed the English Royal Navy in command of the joint Anglo-Dutch fleet and limited the proportion of Dutch warships to three ships for every five English ships.¹⁷⁴ By subjugating the Dutch Navy to the English Navy, he was able to purchase the loyalty of the English Admiralty. This unbalanced approach continued for decades until the Dutch Navy, which once commanded the seas, became a mere shadow of its former glory. The Dutch merchant fleet, however, continued to hold a disproportionate share of international trade—albeit unprotected by a powerful home navy. As time went on, the Dutch began to rely more heavily on neutrality and diplomacy for trade than military might. The British took the opposite approach, relying on the strength of the Royal Navy to bully and bludgeon her allies and enemies into compliance. As an ally of the Britain, Dutch merchants flourished under the protection of the British Navy, but the American Revolution put an end to this cozy relationship.

When the American Revolution erupted in 1775, Great Britain immediately turned to her Dutch ally for help. King George III wished to send a large expe-

174. Jaap Bruijn, *The Dutch Navy of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, p. 80–81.

ditionary force to North America to crush the revolt, but because the British Army was composed of well-trained regular troops, it would be expensive and time consuming to raise a large army at home.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, George III requested the Anglo-Dutch Brigade or Scots Brigade, stationed in the Netherlands, be loaned to him. The States-General, the governing body of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, referred the matter to the individual provinces for a decision. Several provinces immediately agreed to the request, which had strong support from the Stadtholder. Holland, however, would only approve the brigade's release if the British would agree to a series of payments covering the cost of the deployment along with restrictions on where it could be sent; including a prohibition on sending it to America—these restrictions were tantamount to a denial and became the official position of the Dutch Republic. Most concerning for Anglo-Dutch relations was the position of Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Poll, from Overijssel, who, during debate over the fate of the Anglo-Dutch Brigade, publicly proclaimed his strong support for the American cause; going so far as to have his words printed and distributed in the streets, making him many friends among the people who overwhelmingly sympathized with the colonists.¹⁷⁶ The Dutch refusal to turn over the brigade was a blow to relations between the two nations and to the personal relationship between William V and his uncle George III.

Opposition to the unpopular Stadtholder and support for the American colonists became linked in the minds of many Dutch citizens, furthering public support for the rebel cause. Another motivation for Dutch sympathy towards the Americans was the high profits Amsterdam merchants collected selling goods, including military stores, to the rebels. These merchants believed strongly in free trade and greatly resented British efforts to curb their ability to sell goods to whomever they pleased. As a result, a rift developed between William V, who favored a policy of appeasement towards England by limiting goods sold to belligerent nations and Dutch merchants, who hoped to make exorbitant profits selling contraband to Britain's enemies. As the American Revolution dragged on, this rift became more pronounced and was aggravated by a series of international incidents and political blunders.

St. Eustatius is a small rocky island in the Caribbean situated in the northern Leeward Islands portion of the West Indies, southeast of the Virgin Islands. In the 1770s it was controlled by the Dutch and surrounded by French, British, and Spanish colonies. Unlike many Caribbean islands, St. Eustatius produced little in the way of sugar or other valuable commodities and although the island had

175. Jonathan R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1985), p. 46.

176. Friedrich Edler, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution* (John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1911), pp. 28–33.

a small military installation, Ft. Orange, it was, practically speaking, defenseless. The island's principal protection was that it was a free port willing to accept ships and goods from all nations at peace with the United Provinces. As such, it served the needs of many nations. The Dutch Republic had an official policy of neutrality during the American Revolution that, along with certain treaty obligations with Britain, prevented direct trade with the Americans. The Dutch government did, however, permit arms and munitions to be shipped to St. Eustatius—once there anyone, including nations at war with Britain, could purchase anything they desired. American agents stationed on the island purchased inbound shipments of gunpowder and arms at five times the rate these goods sold for in Europe. American ships sailed to the tiny island laden with tobacco, indigo, or hard currency and loaded military stores for the return voyage. The British, of course, were well aware of this trade and understandably angered by it.

As if this was not bad enough, an event occurred on St. Eustatius on November 16, 1776, that had major implications for Anglo-Dutch-American relations. On that day a brig of the Continental Navy, the *Andrew Doria*, commanded by Capt. Isaiah Robinson, flying a flag with 13 stripes, dropped anchor off St. Eustatius waiting entry to the port. As was custom between nations, the American military vessel fired a salute to Ft. Orange to indicate its peaceful intent; this salute was returned by the fort. This was allegedly done on direct orders from the island's governor. In her hold the *Andrew Doria* carried a copy of the Declaration of Independence to be transmitted to Holland. It was not the contents of the brig's hold that upset the British as much as Ft. Orange's salute. By returning the American warship's salute, the Dutch acknowledged the *Andrew Doria* as a vessel from an independent nation. This "First Salute," was the first time any nation formally recognized America as a sovereign and independent nation and the British were apoplectic that their supposed ally, and alleged neutral—the Dutch, would be the first to do it. To add further insult, the *Andrew Doria's* primary mission at St. Eustatius was to pick up a large supply of gunpowder. British spies on the island further reported that Capt. Robinson was treated with great honor and respect wherever he went and was well received by Dutch officials.¹⁷⁷ Capt. Robinson was not the only Continental naval officer to be well-received by the Dutch.

The exploits of the American naval commander John Paul Jones are legendary, and for good reason. Not content to merely ply American waters, Jones took the fight to the enemy. He was the epitome of an officer and a gentleman. On one occasion he attempted to capture a British lord and hold him hostage until the British agreed to treat American sailors in captivity humanely. When the lord

177. See, J. Franklin Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," *American History Review*, Vol. 8, No. 4, July 1903, pp. 683–708; see also, Barbara W. Tuckman, *The First Salute*, (Random House, paperback ed. 1989).

was not home, Jones permitted two of his officers to enter the house and seize all the silver as a prize of war. Later, feeling remorse for the theft, and despite numerous barbaric acts of terror committed against American colonists by the British Royal Navy, he wrote a lengthy letter to the lord's wife apologizing for the actions of his crew and promised to buy back the silver with his own money and return it—a pledge he later fulfilled. Despite this soft side, Jones ranks among the bravest and most fierce naval commanders to ever set sail and he is rightfully regarded as the father of the American Navy. His raids on English soil and molestation of enemy shipping so close to home caused great embarrassment to the Admiralty which desperately wanted to capture and hang him.

Jones greatest feat of arms was the September 23, 1779, Battle of Flamborough Head in the North Sea off the coast of Yorkshire; within eyesight of spectators on shore. It was on that day that Jones, commanding an inferior warship, the *Bonhomme Richard*, fought and captured one of England's newest and largest warships, the HMS *Serapis*. During the course of the battle, Jones managed to lash his burning ship to the *Serapis* and the two vessels embraced in a dance of death as sharpshooters in the masts cleared the decks with lead shot and grenades. With his ship on fire and sinking, Jones boldly boarded the enemy ship and forced her surrender. Now in command of both vessels, he cut the critically damaged *Bonhomme Richard* loose and watched her slip below the waves. This put Jones in quite a pickle—thousands of miles from America and in possession of a crippled enemy ship of the line, two fully-loaded merchant vessels, and 500 prisoners of war, he needed to make port quickly for repairs before the Royal Navy caught up with him.

On October 3, 1779, Jones limped into the Dutch island port of Texel with his convoy of captured and damaged ships, cargo, and prisoners. The British fleet, not wishing to fire on Jones while in a neutral port, quickly sealed the harbor with a 55-gun man-o'-war and three frigates and waited for Jones to emerge. At the same time, a British delegation at The Hague demanded the Dutch turn over Jones, whom they branded a pirate, and sought the release of the captured vessels, crew, and cargo. As the British pressed their case that Jones was a pirate subject to execution, the King of France came to Jones' aid with a declaration that all ships under Jones' command at Texel were French, the prizes belonging to the French crown—this decree was accompanied by a hint that should the Dutch release either Jones or the vessels to the British, trouble between France and the Netherlands would ensue. As the diplomats argued in The Hague, Jones took a tour of the Dutch Republic where he was hailed a hero and toasted everywhere he went as "The Terror of the English." This was true especially in Amsterdam where pro-American feelings ran high.¹⁷⁸ A song was composed

178. See, Scott Martelle, *The Admiral and the Ambassador* (Chicago Review, Chicago, 2014), pp. 58–60, 91–92.

describing his exploits and sung in the streets by the common people. Jones expressed his personal opinion at the time that “[t]he Dutch people are for us and for war.”¹⁷⁹ “Every day” he wrote, “these blessed women come to the ships in great numbers—mothers, daughters, even little girls—bringing with them for our wounded, all the numberless little comforts of Dutch homes; a tribute that came from the hearts of the people, and therefore far overlaid in effect all statecraft and all diplomacy against us.”¹⁸⁰

Meanwhile, William V pleaded in vain with his own government to release Jones to the British. Over time the British demand morphed into a call to expel Jones and his ships from Texel rather than release him to their custody, which, with the British fleet lying in wait outside the harbor, was effectively the same as handing him over. Jones, however, outfoxed the British when, after a severe storm scattered the British ships, he swiftly slipped out of Texel and down the coast to France—attacking and capturing English merchant ships along the way and sailing quickly past anchored English warships that were powerless to intercept him.

Congress honored John Paul Jones for his exploits with a medal engraved by the famed French artist Augustin Dupre. The medal depicts the 1779 Battle of Flamborough Head (Fig. 21). Although it is dated 1779, the same year on the Rhode Island ship medal, and the reverse wording states “*THE SHIPS OF THE ENEMY CAPTURED OR PUT TO FLIGHT ON THE SHORES OF SCOTLAND, SEPT. 23, 1779,*” the John Paul Jones medal did not influence the design of the RISM because it was not authorized by Congress until October 16, 1787, many years after the Rhode Island ship medal was struck.¹⁸¹

King Louis XVI of France was willing to assist John Paul Jones because after the disastrous defeat of British General John Burgoyne’s army at the Battle of Saratoga, France entered into a formal alliance with America against England in 1778. This pact meant the American rebels could expect direct assistance from France in the form of money, troops, and military supplies. In addition, Continental forces could hope to receive help from French warships and marines stationed in the Caribbean. In June of 1779, Spain joined France against England. Although Spain’s King Charles III would not consent to a formal treaty of alliance with the American Colonies, feeling that to encourage another nation’s colonies to revolt was a treacherous game, Spain was a *de facto* ally of the Americans as they shared a common enemy.

With France and Spain now in the war, the British extended the American naval embargo to French and Spanish ports. The Dutch, however, based on a long-standing treaty with the English that granted them wide latitude to trade

179. John Paul Jones private letter dated of December 17, 1779.

180. *Ibid.*

181. Betts-568. The John Paul Jones medal was struck in gold, silver, and bronze.



Figure 21. John Paul Jones medal commissioned by Congress.

with other nations, even enemies of England, continued to trade directly with France and Spain; this included shipments of naval stores. Despite the fact that it had a lawful right to continue this trade, the British demanded that the Dutch not only suspend shipment of naval stores to France, but also join them in an alliance against France. When the Dutch Republic was slow to respond to this demand, the Royal Navy began boarding Dutch merchant vessels in search of contraband. The Dutch, who were very much wed to the idea of free trade, greatly resented the search of their merchant ships. In response to the Royal Navy's actions, the Dutch Navy began escorting its merchant ships starting in November 1779.¹⁸² This set the stage for a direct confrontation between the Dutch Republic and England.

On December 31, 1779, the Royal Navy stopped a Dutch convoy under military escort heading to France and demanded to board and search the merchant ships despite the military escort providing a manifest of the merchant vessels' cargo. After the Dutch naval commander refused to voluntarily permit the search of the merchant ships under his care, the British deployed boarding parties to forcibly explore for contraband. In response, Dutch warships fired warning shots, leading to full broadside exchanges between the two squadrons. The English superiority in firepower was apparent and, having preserved their honor by providing token resistance, the Dutch warships struck their colors and the British boarded and seized several of the merchant vessels that were carrying naval stores. The Dutch merchant ships were taken to Portsmouth and declared war prizes and sold along with their cargo—the proceeds from the sale were

182. Andrew Stockley, *Britain and France at the Birth of America* (Univ. of Exeter Press, UK, 2001), pp. 23–26.

distributed to the naval officers involved in the capture. The humiliated Dutch military vessels were permitted to return to Holland. When news of this incident reached Amsterdam, the people were outraged and clamored for war.

It was not just Dutch ships that were seized, but also ships from Russia and other neutral nations. While the Russians did not have a large merchant fleet, many of the naval stores under embargo originated from her ports. In response, on March 10, 1780, Catherine II of Russia issued a declaration regarding the principals of armed neutrality. The declaration was a direct assault on the British embargo policy and seizure of neutral shipping. On April 3, 1780, the States-General of the Netherlands and other European courts were presented with an offer to join a League of Armed Neutrality whereby the neutral European powers would band together to militarily enforce free trade in the Atlantic and elsewhere. In order to place even greater pressure on the Dutch to conform to a pro-English policy, on April 17th the English suspended their naval treaty with the Dutch and notified them that henceforth they would be treated as a hostile neutral power.¹⁸³ The English simultaneously made it clear that if the Dutch joined them in an alliance against the French, their merchant vessels would once again enjoy favorable treatment, but if they joined the League of Armed Neutrality, war would follow. Seeing an obvious benefit to themselves, Spain and France quickly announced they would abide by the terms of the treaty; setting the stage for all the nations of Europe joining together in opposition to the embargo. Throughout 1780, the smaller European powers jockeyed back and forth between the Russians and British trying to please both parties. For the Dutch, however, the choice was clear—either capitulate to the British demands or join the League of Armed Neutrality and hope the collective naval power of Europe could protect their interests from British retaliation. Although public opinion ran hotly in favor of the treaty, the Stadtholder used all his influence to delay its implementation.

Like many important events in Dutch life, the League of Armed Neutrality was commemorated by medals; one of which was created by John Georg Holtzhey, the eminent Dutch engraver of his day (Fig. 22).^{184, 185} On Holtzhey's medal, which was not an officially issued medal, but a private venture for profit, Catherine the Great appears on the obverse wearing a low-necked dress. On the reverse are the words "A FREE OCEAN" with the date 1780 in Roman numer-

183. David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in European Waters During the American Revolution*, (Univ. of South Carolina, Columbia, 1998), p. 118.

184. Betts, *American Colonial History Illustrated by Contemporary Medals*, p. 198, fn *. Later, Holtzhey would design two medals for John Adams honoring America.

185. Betts-571. Image courtesy of Stack's Bowers, Lot 56, November 2–3, 2016.



Figure 22. Dutch League of Armed Neutrality silver medal—privately engraved by John Georg Holtzhey in Amsterdam in 1780.

als at the bottom. The reverse displays Neptune holding a trident over his head standing in a shell bearing a shield displaying the arms of the four primary neutral countries in favor of the treaty: Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland. To the right of Neptune stands a dejected looking sailor. Mercury sits to the left on a cornucopia pointing at the rudder in the foreground. At the top of the medal blazes a new star, representing America. The medal was probably struck in the fall of 1780 in Amsterdam. This medal indicates that Dutch participation in the League was a forgone conclusion in the minds of the citizens of Amsterdam who saw it as their saving grace.

The popularity of the Treaty of Armed Neutrality among the Dutch people is demonstrated by the fact that several medals were struck to memorialize it and none were struck in opposition. Obviously, engravers felt there was a market for pro-treaty medals, but none for medals in opposition. Another 1780-dated medal was designed by Adriaan van Baerll and is inscribed on the reverse “*JEHOVAH, THE AVENGER OF TREATIES, CONFIRMS CATHERINE’S AID TREATY, LEAVING THE TRADE OF NEUTRAL FORCES INTACT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE*” (Fig. 23)^{186, 187} On the Obverse are the words “*ARMED NEUTRALITY*” along with the shields of several neutral nations including Holland. These beautiful silver pro-treaty medals were issued at the same time Michael Hodder asserts the alleged anti-treaty Rhode Island ship medal was issued. The craftsmanship of these silver medals far outstrips the poorly executed art of the brass RISM. Moreover, the words and symbols of the pro-treaty medals require

186. There are many different translations of this inscription, but this is the one I think is most accurate.

187. Betts-572. Image courtesy of Stack’s Bowers, Lot 57, November 2–3, 2016.



Figure 23. Dutch League of Armed Neutrality silver medal—privately engraved by Adriaan van Baerll in Amsterdam in 1780.

little interpretation to discern their meaning, while the alleged anti-treaty nature of the RISM is, at best, unclear.

The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War

In the fall of 1779, the Continental Congress named Henry Laurens minister to the Netherlands. In early 1780 he took up that post and successfully negotiated Dutch support for the American cause. A draft treaty of commerce was secretly prepared by Laurens and an Amsterdam banker with the support of the city of Amsterdam's chief legal officer. This document would become the final straw when it fell into the hands of the English after they intercepted a ship transporting Laurens back to America. Although the draft treaty was tossed into the ocean, the box containing it was not properly weighted down and it was retrieved by the British who used it as a pretext to declare war on the Dutch Republic a few days before the Treaty of Armed Neutrality was signed. English ministers then argued that because war was declared prior to the signing of the treaty, neither the Russians nor any other neutral power was obligated to come to the defense of the Dutch. This lame excuse was all that was needed for the neutral powers to abandon their new ally and watch from the sidelines as the Royal Navy ravished Dutch ships and colonies.

Like a wolf that has been taunted for years by a flock of fat sheep and one day finds the gate open, the Royal Navy took full revenge on her unfaithful ally. Initially, the Dutch were totally unaware that war had been declared. The Royal Navy and British privateers used this interlude to pounce on fully loaded Dutch merchant vessels in the Atlantic taking hundreds of war prizes. The biggest prize, however, was the island of St. Eustatius. Admiral George Rodney, the command-

er of the Leeward Islands station of the Royal Navy, attacked the Dutch colonies of St. Eustatius, Saba, and St. Martin in the Caribbean; totally surprising the Dutch. On February 3, 1781, Rodney's fleet appeared off the coast of St. Eustatius and demanded the unconditional surrender of Fort Orange, which was quickly arranged. Once ashore, Rodney's marines and sailors looted the prosperous island. The wealth of St. Eustatius shocked the British who treated the Dutch Jewish merchants living there with utter contempt; even digging up the island's Jewish cemetery in search of hidden money. Warehoused goods were sold on the spot while other items were shipped to England on a large convoy. The island's inhabitants were searched for concealed valuables and over 100 Jewish merchants were imprisoned. The plunder made Admiral Rodney a rich man earning him an annual pension for life and the title of baron.

On February 4, 1781, at last awakened to the danger, Dutch warships swung into action in defense of St. Eustatius, but it was too little too late. The Dutch Navy was defeated and its commander killed. His heroic death was memorialized by a silver medal designed by Holtzhey; the obverse showing his image with a funerary scene on the reverse and the words "*INFERIOR IN STRENGTH, BUT NOT IN VALOR. HE FELL FIGHTING, FEB. 4, 1781*" (Fig. 24).¹⁸⁸

The loss of St. Eustatius was further memorialized by a silver medal (Fig. 25).¹⁸⁹ On it a woman symbolizing Holland kneels pointing to an empty horn of plenty, around her the words "*LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL, 1782.*" On the reverse it states "*MY INHERITANCE HAS GONE TO OTHERS, AND MY PROPERTY TO STRANGERS.*" This medal must have summed up the feelings of many Dutch merchants who lost everything when St. Eustatius was sacked.

The English viewed the matter quite differently. Although in some circles Admiral Rodney was criticized for focusing more on plunder than his military objectives, he was generally hailed a national hero for redressing the perceived wrong done his country by the Dutch. Private medal-makers, including Matthew Boulton, came to his defense with medals justifying his plunder and personal gain (Fig. 26).¹⁹⁰ Between 1781 and 1782 a number of Admiral Rodney medals were minted in silver, bronze, and pewter. No official medals were issued by the British government. Figure 26 was produced by Boulton's Soho Mint. It is 34 mm in diameter and carries a remarkable likeness of Rodney; the craftsman-

188. Image courtesy of Stack's, May 31, 2006 Auction (Ford, Part 14), Session 1, Lot 241.

189. Image courtesy of Stack's, May 31, 2006 Auction (Ford, Part 14), Session 1, Lot 260. Van Loon Supp. 569. Betts-599.

190. Image courtesy of Stack's, May 31, 2006 Auction (Ford, Part 14), Session 1, Lot 236. A bronze version was offered in Lot 237. Betts-579 in brass, silver version not noted in Betts.



Figure 24. 1781 privately issued Dutch silver medal engraved by John Georg Holtzhey commemorating the death of the Dutch admiral who died defending Dutch Caribbean holdings against the British.



Figure 25. 1782 Dutch medal lamenting the loss of St. Eustatius.

ship being far superior to the RISM and the political message on the reverse is very clear. The Rodney pieces are a rare example of the use of political propaganda on medals during the reign of George III. According to Boulton's papers, these medals were sold through Birmingham and London toy shops on a sale or return basis.¹⁹¹

Many in England felt the Dutch deserved to be punished for supplying Britain's enemies with arms, munitions, and naval stores. This is apparent from the wording on a pewter Rodney medal (Fig. 27).¹⁹² On this medal, which is not

191. Sim Comfort, *Matthew Boulton's Naval Medals* (London, 2017), pp. 49–53.

192. Image courtesy of Stack's, May 31, 2006 Auction (Ford, Part 14), Session 1, Lot 238.



Figure 26. Privately issued British medal minted by Matthew Boulton honoring Admiral Rodney

believed to have been produced by Boulton, the reverse states “*THE GLORIOUS MEMORY OF THE 3RD OF FEB. 1781 WHEN HE SEVERELY PUNISHED THE DUTCH AT ST. EUSTATIA TAKING UPWARDS OF 3 MILLIONS OF VALUE. WITH 300 SAIL OF SHIPS.*”

Based on the Admiral Rodney medals, it appears the English were eager to punish the Dutch. In light of this, the notion that the Rhode Island ship medal was produced as a propaganda piece to avoid war is questionable. Indeed, we now know for certain that the English wanted war with the Dutch all along. Amazingly, the English thought war would be good for relations between the two nations and the stated causes of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch war were just a pretext.

Recently, the secret diplomatic correspondence between Britain’s ambassador to The Hague, Sir Joseph Yorke, and the secretary of state for the Northern department, Lord Stormont, has come to light. These letters give insight into how Lord North’s administration viewed the Dutch. As it turns out, Sir Joseph was a vocal proponent for war based on reasons that are shockingly naïve. Yorke believed the proper role of the Dutch was to support English foreign policy and that this was best done through the House of Orange in the personage of the young Stadtholder. The problems between the two nations, Sir Joseph believed, were because the Stadtholder was too weak and unable to adequately influence affairs—from a British perspective; this would seem to be accurate. According to the secret diplomatic correspondence, however, Yorke felt the only remedy

Betts-580. A brass version, not listed in Betts, and having slightly different wording was offered in Lot 239.



Figure 27. Privately issued English medal honoring Admiral Rodney for punishing the Dutch.

for the situation was an Anglo-Dutch War.¹⁹³ Such a war, the ambassador argued, would strengthen the Stadtholder and expand his influence over the unruly Dutch provinces, allowing Britain to once again enjoy influence over Dutch domestic and foreign affairs.¹⁹⁴ How Sir Joseph, who had represented Britain in The Hague since 1751, could be so misguided is beyond the scope of this article,¹⁹⁵ but the fact remains that his communiqués from 1779 onward called for war with the Dutch Republic as the best solution for the Stadtholder's diminishing influence. Based on the recommendation of its trusted ambassador to The Hague, the British Navy began preparations for war long before December 1780 as demonstrated by the coordinated and devastating simultaneous attacks carried out across the globe during the war's first weeks.

The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War was an unmitigated disaster for the Dutch Republic. The war was virtually over before most in Holland even knew it had begun; within a few short weeks, the Royal Navy seized hundreds of Dutch merchant vessels along with their cargos worth 15 million guilders. In addition to losing its colonies in the Caribbean, the Dutch lost colonies along the African coast essential for the slave trade. Contrary to Sir Joseph's opinion, the war drove the Dutch into the arms of the French and further weakened the Stadtholder. A true alliance with France, however, was blocked by William V, who still favored

193. H. M. Scott, "Sir Joseph Yorke, Dutch Politics and the Origins of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War," *The Historical Journal*, 31, 3 (1988), p. 583.

194. *Ibid.*, pp. 571–89.

195. The reasons for this diplomatic blunder are spelled out in Scott's article, "Sir Joseph Yorke, Dutch Politics and the Origins of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War," wherein the case is made that Sir Joseph's opinion favoring war was a major reason for the conflict.

England.¹⁹⁶ The people blamed the naval losses on the Stadtholder, who technically commanded the navy. Indeed, everything was blamed on the Stadtholder—which is partly unfair since he never wanted war with England in the first place. The storm of indignation provoked violent attacks on the young Prince of Orange and an uprising was just barely quashed. Eventually things in the Netherlands became untenable for the Stadtholder, who abdicated and fled to England in 1795, where he lived out the rest of his days; a testament to Sir Joseph Yorke's diplomatic blunder.

The idea that the RISM was minted in order to prevent the Dutch from signing the Treaty of Armed Neutrality makes no sense in light of the historic facts. The treaty was presented to the Dutch in April 1780. If the medal was struck in 1779, it was produced before anyone heard of the treaty. In the unlikely event the medal was issued in the spring of 1780, why was it backdated to 1779? Furthermore, compared to the beautiful silver medals issued in favor of the treaty, the ship medal lacks the artistic merit one would expect from a medal financed by the British government. The treaty involved European powers in a naval alliance; America was never contemplated as a party to the treaty. If the alleged purpose of the RISM was to convince the Dutch to not join with other neutral European nations in a naval alliance, why would it depict a North American land battle along with an image of a third-rate warship? The Royal Navy had achieved many naval victories over the French and Spanish; if the point of the medal was to intimidate the Dutch, it seems that an image of a British naval victory and a first-rate ship would have been more appropriate. There is no record in the Admiralty or any other branch of the British government that the RISM was officially approved or financed by England. Therefore, if it was produced in that country as a propaganda piece, it was funded by a rogue private citizen. Wealthy Englishmen did not meddle in foreign affairs without the permission of the government during the Georgian era. Moreover, pamphlets were a far less expensive and effective means of propaganda; why not go that route? Finally, the notion that Dutch foreign policy could be influenced by circulating a few hundred medals with an unclear political message is laughable.

The Battle of Rhode Island

Having exhausted the historical background in Europe required to understand the RISM, the search for clues now turns to the other side of the Atlantic; to America and the battle featured on the medal—the Battle of Rhode Island. After abandoning Boston in March 1776, the British seized and occupied Aquidneck

196. Edler, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution*, pp. 200–01.

Island¹⁹⁷ and Narragansett Bay in the colony of Rhode Island on December 8, 1776. Patriot forces in Newport offered no resistance as it would have been futile to stand and fight. With naval command of the bay, the British were free to maneuver, outflank, and trap any enemy force on one of the islands. For the next two years a military garrison of approximately 6,000 British and Hessian troops occupied Newport straining the land's ability to accommodate them. When temperatures dropped during the unusually cold winters of 1776 to 1778, almost every tree on Aquidneck Island was cut down for fuel. Without warships to command the bay, the Continental Army stood no chance of dislodging the enemy.

The strategic situation changed dramatically in 1778 with the signing of an agreement and alliance between America and France. General Washington believed that with the aid of the French fleet, it might be possible to capture the British garrison at Newport. Late in July 1778 a French fleet of 12 ships of the line and four frigates appeared off Narragansett Bay commanded by Count Jean Baptiste Charles Henri Hector d'Estaing—their mission: to force the surrender of the British garrison at Newport and liberate the city. The French immediately closed off the harbor trapping the British and Hessian troops inside and cutting them off from reinforcements. Soon, several powerful French warships forced their way into the bay and sailed towards Newport. At this point, the British panicked; burning or sinking their own warships docked in and around the city to prevent them from falling into the hands of the French and in order to impede navigation and disrupt an amphibious landing force. This resulted in the British Royal Navy's largest single-campaign loss in American waters during the war. The list of scuttled ships included four 32-gun frigates; a 28-gun frigate; two 14-gun sloops; plus 13 transport vessels.¹⁹⁸

A 1777 map of Narragansett Bay is helpful in following the action (Fig. 28). The large island in the center of the bay is Aquidneck Island, more commonly known as Rhode Island. The map is orientated with magnetic north at the top. Newport is located in the southwest part of the large island. Other areas of importance are Conanicut Island, which is the island to the west of Aquidneck Island directly across from Newport, and Tiverton, which is a town on the mainland across the narrow stretch of water to the north east of Aquidneck Island.

News of the arrival of the French fleet spread quickly throughout New England, and large numbers of local militia joined Major General John Sullivan's Continental forces for what many believed would be the decisive battle of the

197. Even in 1778 Aquidneck Island was more commonly referred to as Rhode Island; however, in order to differentiate the island from the colony and state with the same name, it will be referred to here by its older name.

198. Christian M. McBurney, *The Rhode Island Campaign*, (Westholme Pub., Yardley, PA, 2011), p. 95.

war. Yale College President Ezra Stiles wrote that “there is an amazing Spirit for rushing towards Rh. Isld. spread 100 miles around.”¹⁹⁹ Future First Lady and wife of America’s future ambassador to the Netherlands Abigail Adams penned, “the spirit I assure you is greater here than you ever saw it. Gentlemen of rank and fortune have joined the Army in the capacity of volunteers, the spirit caught from town to town surprisingly. Portsmouth, Newburyport, Salem, Boston, all their chosen sons have marched with a spirit and vigor that does honor to America.”²⁰⁰ The point of embarkation for Sullivan’s troops was the small town of Tiverton. The plan was to ferry the soldiers in small boats from Tiverton to the north-eastern tip of Aquidneck Island and proceed down the island and lay siege to Newport. The Americans were to be joined in the siege by Admiral d’Estaing’s marines.

On August 9, d’Estaing’s ships began ferrying marines to Conanicut Island. The plan was to stage them there before maneuvering them into place for the final assault. When the British commander, Sir Robert Pigot, realized that French marines were landing on the island across from Newport, he withdrew his forces into the city’s defensive perimeter. Gen. Sullivan, seeing that the high ground on the northern part of Aquidneck Island was abandoned, quickly transported over 10,000 Continental soldiers from Tiverton to seize the advantage. At this stage, things were going very well for the joint American-French forces; victory was all but assured. But fickle fate soon intervened in the guise of British Vice-Admiral Lord Richard Howe, commander of all English naval forces in America,²⁰¹ who unexpectedly appeared on the horizon with a naval squadron from New York. Now it was Admiral d’Estaing’s turn to panic. Not knowing the size of Howe’s squadron, d’Estaing was concerned his ships might become trapped in Narragansett Bay where they would be easy targets for land-based artillery. Further fearing a naval engagement without the support of his marines, d’Estaing ordered all the French troops on Conanicut Island back onto their boats. Once the French warships had their full complement of marines onboard, they headed out to sea to engage the British.

Meanwhile, General Sullivan, who was fully committed to the assault on the Newport garrison, pressed south to begin the siege with the expectation that after Admiral d’Estaing defeated Howe, he would return to help finish off the

199. Franklin Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D. LL.D.*, Vol II (Scribner’s Sons, NY, 1901), p. 294, Entry for Aug. 11, 1778.

200. Abigail Adams to J. Thaxter, Aug. 19, 1778, *Adams Family Corr.* 2:367.

201. On December 7, 1775, Richard Howe was raised to the rank of vice-admiral of the blue. On February 15, 1776, he was appointed commander-in-chief of the North American station and received a joint commission, along with his brother, General Sir William Howe, to treat with the Americans and restore peace with the colonies.

trapped Red Coats and Hessians. Out at sea, Admiral Howe, who commanded the smaller of the two fleets from his flagship HMS *Eagle*, ordered the British warships to weigh anchor, form a battle line, and prepare for action. It appeared to everyone on shore that they were about to witness an epic naval battle that might decide the war—if d’Estaing was victorious, his troops would return, land outside of Newport, and assist in the capture of the entire garrison of over 6,000 British, Hessian, and Loyalist soldiers; on the other hand, if Howe fought the French off, his warships would return and trap the Continental forces on the island where they would be easily dispatched by the British and Hessian troops now cowering inside Newport.

As we know, neither of the two outlined scenarios occurred. Instead, an unexpected storm arose as the two fleets moved off the coast. The storm, most likely a hurricane, scattered the fleets and inflicted great damage to ships from both navies as it howled for days. Back on land, the storm blew away the tents of the Continental forces exposing the men to its full fury; soaking them and their gunpowder. As the storm lifted there were several minor naval engagements between isolated enemy ships that found themselves in one another’s proximity, the main bodies of the two fleets, however, were too distant and damaged to continue the fight. The French fleet regrouped off Delaware and the British off New York. On August 20, Admiral d’Estaing reported to General Sullivan that his ships needed to make for Boston for repairs and he could no longer support the siege. Sullivan was more than a little upset at this news feeling as if he was on the cusp of victory; a victory now denied him by an overly cautious French naval officer. In his anger Sullivan publicly criticized d’Estaing’s decision as “derogatory to the honor of France.”²⁰² Sullivan’s imprudent words, even if true, damaged American-French relations.

Sullivan’s thoughts, however, soon turned to his own now precarious military position—for the hunter was about to become the hunted. When the militia troops outside of Newport realized the French fleet was not returning, their spirits sank. Soaked by rain, the volunteers began to desert in droves. Sullivan’s numerical advantage literally slipped away in the night. On August 24, Sullivan made the decision to give up the siege and withdraw back up Aquidneck Island and make the water crossing over to the safety of Tiverton. The last of Sullivan’s troops withdrew from their siege camps on August 28, 1778. Inside Newport, Gen. Pigot learned of the American withdrawal from deserters who snuck into the city. Smelling blood, the British and their Hessian mercenary allies sortied,

202. Colonel Israel Angell, commander of the Second Rhode Island Regiment, was more restrained. He wrote in his private diary, “... the French fleet Left us to day (*sic*) bound for Boston and I think left us in a most Rascally manner...”

pursuing the remaining Americans north. With large numbers of militia gone, the core of Sullivan's army consisted of battle-hardened Continental regulars who had survived the grueling winter at Valley Forge and received training in the art of hand to hand combat with the bayonet from General Friedrich von Steuben.

On August 29, 1778, Hessian regiments marched up the west road and British regulars advancing up the east road engaging the Americans in the northern portion of Aquidneck Island. Sullivan's troops took advantage of defensive positions constructed on a series of hills; there repulsing numerous assaults and attempted flanking maneuvers by the enemy. With no trees for cover, the two sides exchanged withering musket fire at point blank range on a sultry afternoon.

Towards the end of the first day, as the Hessians were involved in their third frontal assault on the American position, a Continental brigade attacked their flank with a spectacular bayonet charge. The stunned Hessians, having used the bayonet to great effect against green American troops outside New York City in 1776, were not accustomed to being on the receiving end of such an attack. The charge resulted in a panicked flight by the Hessians who ran for the protective cover of their defenses with American soldiers in pursuit. In their haste, the Hessians left behind their wounded and dying comrades along with an artillery piece. The Americans, having seized the advantage, assaulted the Hessian position, but could not dislodge the enemy. As darkness fell, fighting stopped except for the spattering exchange of ineffective artillery fire.

In the midst of the battle three British warships with an arsenal of 50 guns appeared on the American's right flank along with a Loyalist brig and began to cannonade the Americans with little effect. The ships were forced to withdraw by Continental artillery. The warships are shown on a contemporary map prepared by Col. Israel Angell, commander of the 2nd R.I. Regiment (Fig. 29).²⁰³ The three British ships are also depicted on the Rhode Island ship medal and have historically been mistaken by numismatists as vessels under the direct command of Admiral Howe. The ships, however, were dispatched to the scene by Capt. John Brisbane, Newport's senior naval officer and commander of the frigate *Flora*, one of the ships scuttled when Admiral d'Estaing's fleet appeared in

203. The map has been rotated so it matches more closely the orientation of Fig. 28 and the image on the reverse of the Rhode Island Ship Medal. Col. Israel notes the arrival of the three ships in his diary on August 27, 1787, "I was Officer of the Day to day. Three large Ships arrived in the harbor about two o'clock Suppos'd to be from New York..." Edward Field, ed., *Israel Angell Commanding the Second Rhode Island Regiment during the American Revolution 1778-1781*, (Preston & Rounds, Providence, R.I. 1899), pp. 6-7. The ships were the sixth-rate 20-gun frigate *Sphinx*, the converted 20-gun armed merchant ship *Vigilant*, and the 10-gun row galley *Spitfire*. These three ships were joined by a Loyalist brig, and another unidentified armed vessel—these later two vessels contributed nothing to the effort.

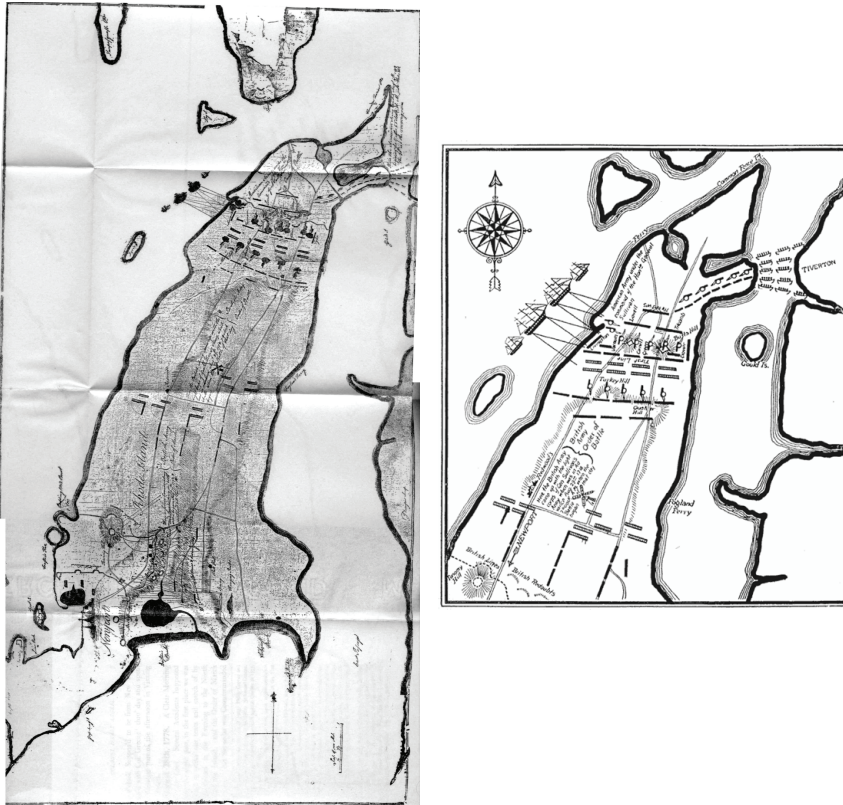


Figure 29. Left: Col. Israel Angell's contemporary map of Battle of Rhode Island. Right: Graphic prepared by Rhode Island State Bureau of Information in 1930 that more clearly shows the action.

the bay at the outset of the battle.²⁰⁴ There is no evidence that these ships had any impact on the outcome of the battle; to the contrary, the reports all show that Continental forces dealt with them swiftly and appropriately. American field artillery on Aquidneck Island alternated volleys between the Hessians to their front and English ships to their right until the ships withdrew. The British ships then rounded the north of Aquidneck Island to proceed with their primary mission—the disruption of the American maritime withdrawal from the island. The Americans, however, were once again prepared and drove the ships off with fire from shore batteries near Tiverton. As such, while the threat of the return of Howe's fleet with reinforcement did impact how the battle was fought, British warships played no direct role in the outcome of the land battle on August 28–29, 1778, and actually failed in their ability to inflict any damage on the American positions during the battle or disrupt the American troop withdrawal from the island. As such, the moment frozen in time on the Rhode Island ship medal depicts a failure of British military tactics.

The next morning the field was littered with the dead and dying, but neither side advanced, tending instead to their wounded. The Americans, having received reports that Howe was en route from New York with reinforcements, conducted an orderly withdrawal back to the mainland taking with them all their cannon, men, and arms. If you look closely at the Rhode Island ship medal, you will notice that the American soldiers are marching to the east in an organized manner with their weapons shouldered. This is indicative of a strategic withdrawal, not a panicked flight from the enemy. On September 1, 1778, Howe's squadron returned to Narragansett Bay with 5,000 reinforcements, but the swift Americans were gone. Later that month, Howe unexpectedly resigned his command and sailed for England, arriving there aboard the HMS *Eagle* on October 25, 1778.²⁰⁵ It was not, however, until October 30, 1778, that he was ordered to strike his flag and come ashore at Portsmouth.²⁰⁶ The third-rate 64-gun ship-of-the-line *Eagle* had been used by Howe as his flagship during his tenure in America from 1776 to 1778.²⁰⁷ Although larger warships were available for duty,²⁰⁸ the First Lord of the Admiralty would not release them to Howe fearing

204. Christian M. McBurney, *The Rhode Island Campaign*, (Westholme Pub., Yardley, PA, 2011), p. 84, 110, 189–90.

205. Sir John Barrow, *The Life of Richard Earl Howe, K.G., Admiral of the Fleet and General of Marines*, (John Murray, Pub., London, 1838), p. 116.

206. *Ibid.*

207. Built by Wells of Rotherhithe, the HMS *Eagle* launched on May 2, 1774, she was 160' long, 44'-6" wide, and 1,372 tons. The HMS *Eagle* was broken up in 1812.

208. The first-rate HMS *Victory*, for example, which was launched in 1765, has three decks, is 205' long, and weighs 3,556 tons with a complement of 104 cannon.

an attack on England itself from the main body of the French fleet. Lord Howe was very critical of the Admiralty's conduct of the war, and it, in turn, was very critical of him.

Upon Howe's arrival at Portsmouth "he learned that the ministry was abusing him 'unmercifully,' blaming him whenever possible for its failure to end the rebellion."²⁰⁹ Things were not always that way, but Howe's perceived failure at the Battle of Rhode Island soured the administration's view of him and seriously harmed his reputation. When news initially reached England on September 13, 1778, that Howe was about to engage the French fleet off Rhode Island, spirits were high. The king was well-pleased saying "Lord Howe now appears in the line where he cannot but shine, though not so fit for the chicanes of negotiations, I trust, if he can oblige d'Estaing to fight, he will give a most agreeable account." The king's comments showed his displeasure at Howe's inability to negotiate an end to the American Revolution—a mission doomed to failure from the start since Howe's arrival on station coincided with the signing of the Declaration of Independence. While the king and others were disappointed with Howe's failure to negotiate a peace, no one in England on September 13 doubted his abilities as a naval commander and desire to take the fight to the enemy. The king's satisfaction with Howe's martial abilities, however, changed abruptly when news reached London that he had resigned his command without notice and returned to England without destroying d'Estaing's fleet. The king was not the only one to have a change of heart concerning Howe.

Everywhere in London there were "expressions of surprise, disbelief, and disappointment."²¹⁰ The disappointment was the more intense because many people were of the same initial view as the king upon hearing that Howe was about to confront the French fleet. A contemporary account from Thomas Hutchinson, the exiled Lieutenant Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony then living in London, shows that "many people had great expectations of something being done by Lord H before he quitted his command."²¹¹ Specifically, Lord Horace Walpole, the son of the former prime minister lamented that "we had been amused with a notion that Lord Howe was blocking up M. D'Estaing in Boston, and would certainly take him and his whole fleet."²¹² When it was discovered in London that Admiral Howe had "taken nothing but his leave," his enemies rallied against him.²¹³

209. Ira Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*, (Univ. of N.C. Press, Chapel Hill, 1972), p. 325.

210. *Ibid.*, p. 328.

211. *Ibid.*

212. *Ibid.*

213. *Ibid.*

For his part, Howe showed contempt for the ministry, as well as naval convention, by going directly to his estate instead of London after landing in Portsmouth. Ignoring his critics, Howe initially withdrew into self-imposed isolation. At first the ministry was willing to assume he was resting from his voyage, but when it became clear he was intentionally snubbing them by not coming to London, they showed less charity. The ministry attacked Howe even more vigorously and snubbed him in turn, failing to seek his advice or opinion concerning North American affairs. Howe, however, had an ace up his sleeve for he was not only an admiral and a lord, but also an elected member of parliament. As such, he had a platform to speak freely and publicly regarding the administration and to demand a public inquiry into his conduct to clear his good name. Howe allied himself with the opposition to Prime Minister Frederick North's government and its conduct of the war in North America.

For the next three years Richard Howe and his brother William Howe defended their handling of the war in America from attacks in the press and their political enemies. An inquiry by Parliament into their conduct was held in 1779. The inquiry turned into a mini-trial and public spectacle that dragged on for several months before it ended without reaching a conclusion. Not satisfied to merely defend himself, Howe lashed out at the administration. On March 8, 1779, Lord Richard Howe rose to address the House of Commons. In his statement he asserted that he had been attacked in pamphlets and newspapers, written, in many instances, by persons in the confidence of ministers. He defended his conduct of the war and declared that he had been deceived into his command; that tired and disgusted, he would have returned home sooner but he could not think of leaving while a superior naval force remained in the American seas. He ended his address by publicly declaring that as long as the present administration remained in power he would refuse any further naval appointment.

On March 15 and 22, Howe addressed the House of Commons, this time speaking in favor of a public censure of the Admiralty's conduct of the war and directly attacking several ministers by name. He stated that Lord Germaine, the Secretary of State for America, had "thwarted, disappointed and deceived" him and that the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Sandwich, had given him "nothing but neglects and injuries."²¹⁴ Going even further, he asked how either he or anyone else could serve under men "who had neither the ability to act on their own judgment nor the integrity and good sense to follow the advice of others?" By the middle of March 1779, Lord Howe had become one of the most outspo-

214. *Ibid.*, p. 338.

ken critics of the administration and the war in North America. It would not be until after the Battle of Yorktown and the subsequent fall of Lord North's administration that Howe once again accepted military command.²¹⁵ As such, Admiral Lord Richard Howe was not in a position of military authority when, on October 25, 1779, General Henry Clinton ordered the Newport garrison abandoned as part of the larger British Southern Campaign.

Regardless of which side actually won the battle, what is more important to this study is the immediate fallout and how it was reported and perceived in America and Europe. In England, the writing was on the wall. While the British were able to dodge a bullet on this occasion, the involvement of the French was a game-changer. British land and naval forces could no longer concentrate just on the rebellion but had to guard against the French and Spanish everywhere around the rim of the Atlantic. While the administration pointed fingers at the Howe brothers, many in Parliament questioned the government's ability to prosecute this now larger war. Since Lord North's administration had not distinguished itself in the brilliance of its strategic thinking when faced with a small colonial rebellion, what could be expected of it now that it was confronted with war in both Europe and America? To these realists, the colonies were a lost cause no longer worth the cost in men and treasure. In England, the Battle of Rhode Island was viewed as anything but a victory—it was a harbinger of bad things to come.

In America, the Battle of Rhode Island was perceived much differently. Unlike today's 24-hour news cycle, information traveled slowly in the 18th century. On August 31, 1778, the *Massachusetts Spy* reported the arrival of Count d'Estaing's squadron in Boston Harbor stating that he was there "to repair the damage sustained by some of his ships in the late storm, which providentially snatched from him a probable victory over Lord Howe and his fleet, who was bringing [succor] to the British army on the Island." It was further reported that "Count d'Estaing has offered to go in person immediately to Rhode-Island, at the head of his troops and mariners." The first newspaper report of the American evacuation of the island was published on September 3rd in Boston's *Continental Journal* where it was reported that "[o]n Sunday last our army retreated in good order from Rhode Island, and brought off all their artillery, baggage, etc. and we hear are now encamped at Tiverton." On September 1, General Washington sent a letter to Congress enclosing General Sullivan's report of the battle. Washing-

215. In 1783, Richard Howe was named First Lord of the Admiralty, arguably the most prestigious military position in the world at that time. In this position, Howe served with great distinction, repeatedly defeating the French and Spanish fleets to the glory of his name and that of the British Royal Navy. He died at his home on August 5, 1799.

ton's letter and Sullivan's report were published in full on September 4 in several newspapers including the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*. In his letter to Congress, Washington congratulated that body "on the repulse of the enemy." Sullivan's description of the fighting on August 29 concluded with the statement that "[t]he enemy were obliged to retire in great disorder, leaving us in full possession of the field of action." Overall, the reaction to the battle in America was "great disappointment"²¹⁶ for the lost opportunity and praise for the conduct of the military commanders with most people blaming the French for the lack of total victory. While disappointed, the American patriots retained a spirit of "we will get them next time," and, of course, a few years later at the small village of Yorktown the combined American-French forces did just that.

Who won the Battle of Rhode Island is up for debate—the Americans inflicted more casualties on the enemy,²¹⁷ but did not accomplish their military objective of liberating Newport. Although the Americans abandoned the siege, they had stood toe-to-toe with the finest soldiers Europe had to offer, arguably getting the better of them before conducting a highly disciplined withdrawal from the island. As America would later learn in Vietnam after the Tet Offensive—it is possible to win a battle and still lose in the court of public opinion. In London, fighting the rebels and French to a draw was not seen as a victory worth crowing about, much less memorializing on a medal.

Had the Dutch permitted George III to borrow the Anglo-Dutch Brigade in 1775, like the Stadtholder wanted, it would have been Dutch young men, instead of Hessians, who were killed on August 28–29, 1778, as mercenaries of the British. These men would have come disproportionately from the lower classes of cities like Amsterdam and been slaughtered as for a cause in which they did not believe. As John Paul Jones observed in 1779, "[t]he Dutch people are for [America] and for war" with England. Moreover, according to Lord Admiral Howe's words in Parliament, the Scots Brigade would have been led by men "who had neither the ability to act on their own judgment nor the integrity and good sense to follow the advice of others." In light of all this it is hard to imagine the Rhode Island ship medal as English propaganda aimed at the Dutch. Furthermore, based on the antagonistic relationship between Admiral Howe and

216. Ezra Stiles wrote in his diary entry for Sept. 5, 1778, "Great Disappointment respecting Rd. Isld. Expedition." Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, p. 299.

217. Gen. Pigot's official report showed combined British, Hessian, and Loyalist casualties of 260 with 38 dead, while Gen. Sullivan reported 211 American casualties with 30 dead—a surprisingly small number of casualties on both sides considering the intense fighting. One assumed both men sought to spin the numbers in their favor. Although the actual numbers are still debated, historians generally agree that the British suffered higher numbers of dead and wounded than did the Americans.

Lord North's ministers it seems extremely unlikely that any medal depicting him in a favorable light would have been commissioned by the English government in 1779 or 1780. But, if the RISM is not an English propaganda medal, what is it?

THE RHODE ISLAND SHIP MEDAL IS A DUTCH MEDALLIC-JETON

Throughout this article I have called the RISM a medal, but it is not technically a medal. Over the past 200 years, it has been called many things—token, medal, jeton, and counter, to name a few. My opinion is that the RISM is a Dutch medallic-jeton. I understand that this will be a controversial statement, but any controversy I believe will be out of ignorance of the history of counters, jetons, and medals minted in the Low Countries. This is one of the reasons why the RISM has remained a mystery for so long. We take what we know of American and English numismatics and apply that to the rest of Europe as if it were a uniform place with only one numismatic tradition, but the truth is that the various regions of Europe have similar but slightly different numismatic histories, and a one-size-fits-all approach does not always work. Also, because jetons were not minted or used extensively in America, if at all, collectors here are generally unfamiliar with them.²¹⁸ Throughout Europe, however, they are ubiquitous, with a history stretching from Ancient Rome to the Enlightenment.

Mathematics, like reading, was not a skill enjoyed by many people during the Dark Ages. To assist in computations a calculator of some sort was needed. The answer was the counting board, which is similar to an abacus, and was widely used in Europe from the 13th–17th centuries with antecedents in Ancient Rome. The counting board was a means of conducting mathematical calculations on a flat surface in which mostly round metal disks were moved between lines like the shifting of beads on an abacus (Fig. 30).²¹⁹

The metal disks were called different things in different parts of Europe, but in the Low Countries and Germany they were known as *legpenning* or *reken-*

218. An argument can be made that the New Yorke in America token, circa 1670, is a jeton that saw some circulation in the Colony of New York. Archeological research at Jamestown has revealed many Dutch jetons that were, in this author's opinion, used as an exchange medium amongst the early settlers to America. Other jetons were introduced into areas controlled by the French. See generally, Ed. Frossard, *Franco-American Jetons*, (Priv. Pub., New York, 1899). These uses of jetons in America are the exception, not the norm.

219. A detailed explanation of how the counting board worked and how it compares to other similar systems is beyond the scope of this article. Anyone interested in learning more is directed to Thomas Snelling, *A View of the Origin, Nature, and Use of Jettons or Counters. Especially Those commonly known by the Name of Black Money and Abbey Pieces; with A Sketch of the Manner of Reckoning with them, and its Affinity with that of the Roman Abacus, the Chinese Soan Pan, and the Russian Shtchota. With Copper-Plates*, (London, 1769), pp. 13–16.



Figure 30. Engraving probably from Strasbourg showing a counting board.

penningen. In America and England today they are generally referred to as counters or jetons. The word “jeton” is connected to the French verb *jeter*, used in the sense of “to push,” because the operation of calculating with jetons consisted of shifting them around the counting board.²²⁰ Initially, the disks were plain coin-like metal objects sometimes adorned with religious images, but as time went on they became more elaborate in their design.

The Dutch loved jetons and medals of all kinds. John Adams, who served as the American ambassador to Holland starting in 1780, commented on the many medals the Dutch sent to him “to perpetuate the Remembrance” of his time with them, and he in turn sent medals to his friends in Holland and even commissioned two American medals from artists in Amsterdam.²²¹ The Dutch developed a unique style of jeton and medal based on their struggle with the Spanish during the Dutch Revolt. This style was often overtly political and, quite frankly, frequently shocking in its depiction of violence and anti-Catholic messages. In order to make the political point more memorable and appealing to the common people, humor, sarcasm, or grotesque images were often incorporated into the

220. Francis Pierrepont Barnard, *The Casting-Counter and the Counting-Board: A Chapter in the history of numismatics and early arithmetic*, (Reprint ed., Castle Cary Press, Somerset 1981), p. 26.

221. Letter, John Adams to Abigail Adams dated “Paris May 20, 1783.”

designs. The images on these jetons have been aptly described as “uncouth.”²²² Jetons and medals with political and historical images played a role in the Dutch struggle against the Spanish, helping to cement the Dutch peoples’ love affair with these objects.

The story of the Dutch Revolt can be told through political medals and jetons. Medals issued by the Dutch during the revolt and the first half of the Eighty Year’s War are collectively known as Geuzen medals or Sea Beggar’s medals. Symbols of the revolt “became all the rage and in no time these were being exploited commercially” by artists and metal-makers looking to turn a profit.²²³ Medals made of wax, wood, lead, pewter, and copper were on sale to the poor and lower classes, while those who could afford such things purchased medals made of silver and gold.²²⁴ Political messages were often distributed by way of jetons. During the Dutch Revolt, about 2,000 different, mostly political, jetons were minted depicting the victories, ideals, and aims of those opposed to Spanish rule.²²⁵ According to Bert Van Beek, in his paper, “Jetons: Their Use and History,” “[t]he first part of the Dutch Revolt provides a splendid example of the political use of jetons. From 1572 to 1609 many jetons were used as part of the psychological warfare, comparable with the issue of pamphlets and prints.” During this period, the jetons of the Netherlands were often struck in official mints by government order with designs selected by the ruling class. Although mostly copper, some jetons were minted in brass, pewter, silver, or gold. Because jetons were a medium through which propaganda was transmitted to the Dutch people, the size of these objects was larger than in the rest of Europe.

Many American collectors think of jetons as smaller numismatic objects about the size of today’s quarter. This is probably because French, German, Russian, and English jetons are often this size;²²⁶ however, starting in the mid-17th century the dimensions of jetons in the Low Countries moved in the opposite direction from the rest of Europe and actually became larger. Dutch jetons are

222. Barnard, *The Casting-Counter and the Counting-Board*, p. 43.

223. Alastair Duke, *Dissident Identities in the Early Modern Low Countries*, (Ashgate, Pub., England 2009) pp. 147–48.

224. *Ibid.*

225. A collection of these jetons can be seen in the auction catalog prepared by the Swiss Bank Corporation titled “Niederländische Rechenpfennig und Marken” held in Zurich on September 17, 1992.

226. Robert Levinson, “The ‘Nach Amerika’ Tokens of Nuremberg—a Little Known, Betts-Related Token From the Colonial Days, *C4N*, Vol 20, No. 2, Summer, 2012, p. 23. Levinson explains that German jetons became smaller in diameter and were struck on thinner planchets after 1650. These jetons were used in gaming houses as chips or tokens. Some were less than half the size of jetons issued in the Low Countries.

often twice as large as those found elsewhere during the 18th century. According to F. P. Barnard, late professor of medieval archaeology at the University of Liverpool, by the middle of the 18th century the size of jetons in the Netherlands exceeded 35 mm in diameter in many instances.²²⁷ A chart provided by Barnard indicates that the Rhode Island ship medal is within the size range of jetons issued after 1750 in the Low Countries.²²⁸ Therefore, it would be incorrect to believe the RISM cannot be a jeton because of its size. In fact, just the opposite inference should be drawn.

The governmental and private use of medals and jetons to spread political propaganda in the Low Countries is unlike the history of these objects in Britain. In his forward to Laurence Brown's book on *British Historical Medals 1760-1960*, J. G. Pollard writes that British medals struck during the reign of George III show "a remarkable lack of official interest in the medal as a form of commemorative propaganda."²²⁹ Few medals were officially issued by the British government in the 18th century; those that were commemorated events like the coronation of George III and the Peace of Utrecht (1713). This practice carried forward into the early part of the 19th century. As a result, incredibly important events in the history of the nation like the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo were not commemorated with officially issued medals, although private medals were issued. The market for privately issued medals in Britain was small compared to that of Continental Europe. None of the principal British private mints operated at anything near capacity and "no medallist lived solely by the practice of the art."²³⁰ This is in sharp contrast to Holland where successful engravers like Adriaan van Baerll and John Georg Holtzhey competed to produce high-quality political medals for a public eager for such products. This is not to say that some British private issues were not political in nature, but, taken as a whole, they have an altogether different feel from Dutch medals and jetons. The biting satire and overt nationalism commonly depicted on Dutch medals and jetons is rarely encountered on British pieces of the period, which instead simply record important events in the life of the nation without overly politicizing them.²³¹ British

227. Barnard, *The Casting-Counter and the Counting-Board*, p. 33.

228. *Ibid.* pp. 33 and 92. Barnard uses Mionnet's scale. At 32 mm in diameter, the RISM is between a 9 and 10 on this scale. Barnard's research indicates that 18th-century Dutch jetons had increased to between 10 and 11 on the Mionnet scale.

229. Laurence A. Brown, *British Historical Medals 1760-1960*, Vol 1., (Seaby Pub., 1980), Forward by J.G. Pollard, p. ix.

230. *Ibid.*, p. x.

231. A huge exception to the above must be made for British anti-slavery tokens, which were privately issued by British abolitionist groups. Another exception is the 1819 Peterloo Massacre medal, which employed both graphic images and words to make a political point.



Figure 31. English jeton from the reign of George III.

jetons of the period, which, at about 20 mm in diameter, were much smaller than Dutch jetons, are mostly apolitical mainly displaying simple images of George III on the obverse and the royal coat of arms on the reverse (Fig. 31).²³²

By the mid-18th century jetons were no longer used as counters in England or Holland as the counting board had given way to the arithmetic used today. Consequently, jetons were also no longer produced at government mints, but were the domain of private individuals looking to make a profit from their sale. What practical use were these objects if the counting board was passé? Evidence suggests one use was in games of chance, like today's poker chips, or to keep score in other card games like whist. Several jetons depict the alphabet on the reverse and may have been used to help children and adults learn to read. In Holland, jetons were used to spread news of contemporary events and to entertain the masses with popular satirical or humorous images.

The line between medals and jetons began to blur in the 18th century in Holland, but there are a few guidelines that can be used to assist in differentiating between the two. Jetons remained, for the most part, true to their origins. That is to say that jetons, even medallic-jetons, which trespassed into the realm of medallic content, were still low relief; a remnant of their past when they needed to be slid quickly across the reckoning-table or cloth and stacked to economize space.²³³ Medallic-jetons were also generally smaller in size than medals, a distinction also shared by medalets, but with an overall lower quality of workmanship than seen on medals and medalets. Also, jetons were most often struck on a thinner flan than medalets or medals; however, this was not always

²³². Image from author's collection.

²³³. Barnard, *The Casting-Counter and the Counting-Board*, pp. 39–40.

the case. While German jetons were signed by the die's engraver, Dutch jetons rarely were. In contrast, Dutch medals, like those illustrated in Figures 22–25, were generally in silver and marked by the engraver. According to Professor Barnard, “the real test is the degree of relief. The traditional low relief of the counter was maintained, presumably as a convention, even upon many French medallic-jettons of the 18th century which probably were not intended in the first place for accounts but had a commemorative object.”²³⁴ For historical reasons that need not be discussed here, jetons were traditionally distributed on New Year's Day with those of a medallic nature often commemorating or illustrating a significant event of the prior year. In this way, a jeton may depict something like the Battle of Rhode Island, which occurred in 1778, but display a date of 1779—the year of issue. Similarly, the Dutch medallic-jeton depicting the foundering of the HMS *Royal George*, which happened in 1782, is dated 1783.

Dutch jetons often covered contemporary events relating to Dutch affairs and in some instances English foreign and internal affairs. As a Protestant country liberated from Spanish Catholic rule, the Dutch had a close military, religious, and commercial relationship with the English even before William of Orange assumed the throne of England. Therefore, a favorite topic of Dutch jetons was English political events, particularly events that impacted Holland either directly or indirectly. An examination of Dutch jetons shows that many commemorate prominent events in English history such as the destruction of the Spanish Armada, the Thanksgiving of Queen Elizabeth in 1589, Elizabeth's negotiations with the United Provinces, the defection in 1598 of Henry IV from the Anglo-French-Dutch alliance against Spain, and the Gunpowder Plot, to name a few. Some illustrations will help the reader understand the nature of these medallic-jetons better.

In 1585, a humorous medallic-jeton was struck in copper and silver to commemorate the Treaty of Nonsuch signed by Queen Elizabeth on August 10, 1585. Initially intended as a way to lift the Spanish siege of Antwerp, Elizabeth agreed to supply 6,400 footsoldiers and 1,000 cavalry, along with an annual subsidy of 600,000 florins to the Dutch revolutionaries. Spain rightfully viewed this treaty as a declaration of war, leading to the Spanish Armada three years later. On the medallic-jeton, Elizabeth enthroned presents roses to Dutch emissaries, while on the reverse two Spaniards eat hay from a manger next to a horse and donkey. Over 400 years later, the entertaining nature of this 29.5 mm diameter copper jeton can still be appreciated (Fig. 32).²³⁵

234. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

235. Image is of jeton in author's collection.



Figure 32. 1585 Dutch medallic-jeton showing Elizabeth I giving roses to the Dutch while the Spanish eat hay from a trough with a donkey and a horse.



Figure 33. 1588 Dutch medallic-jeton showing Dutch prayer for God's grace with a broken and sinking Spanish warship on the reverse with drowning Spanish sailors.

The Dutch believed God was on their side and would answer their prayers and vanquish their enemies. This belief is captured on a 29.5 mm copper medallic-jeton issued in 1588 (Fig. 33).²³⁶ The obverse shows a Dutch family praying to God with a legend reading—“*MAN PROPOSES: GOD DISPOSES*” On the reverse a Spanish ship is shown breaking up with sailors panicking surrounded by the words—“*THE SPANISH ARE IN FLIGHT AND PERISH WITH NO ONE*

236. Image is of jeton in author's collection.

IN PURSUIT.” The Dutch, like the English, viewed the storm that destroyed the Spanish Armada as an act of Providence. The image of the sinking Spanish warship and drowning sailors was the answer to the Dutch people’s prayers and the suffering of their enemies would have brought them a sense of malicious pleasure.

In 1605, a copper jeton was “struck in Holland by order of the Senate to commemorate the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, and the subsequent expulsion from Holland of the Jesuits, whose latent intrigues in France and England are intimated by the snake among the lilies and roses.”²³⁷ The legend on the reverse is taken from the 121st Psalm and reads, “*HE THAT KEEPETH THE WILL NOT SLEEP*.” The center of the reverse has the name of Jehovah in Hebrew. The obverse legend states, “*HE, WHO CONCEALED HIMSELF, IS DETECTED. BY ORDER OF THE SENATE*.” The date of the jeton is a chronogram—the larger letters are actually Roman numerals that when rearranged in descending order read MDCIIIII (1605). This jeton, which is 29.5 mm in diameter, is highly political and relates almost entirely to English internal affairs (Fig. 34).

The medallic-jetons illustrated in Figures 32–34 were officially produced by the Dutch government in the 16th and 17th centuries and are shown here to demonstrate the size and English subject matter of some Dutch medallic-jetons. A much better comparison to the RISM, however, can be found in the 1783 Royal George jeton. This medallic-jeton, like the RISM, is peculiar in its choice of images and wording. It was minted within four years of the Rhode Island ship medal, and, at 32 mm in diameter, is roughly the same size. The punches used in the legend of the Royal George medallic-jeton are very similar to those used to create the dies for the RISM. Both jetons also depict English events from August of the previous year. As such, the Royal George medallic-jeton merits a close examination and comparison to the RISM (Fig. 35).²³⁸

Like the RISM, the Royal George jeton was the product of a private mint and shows an English warship along with the name of a Royal Navy Admiral on one side and a battle scene on the other side. Based on the subject matter, this medallic-jeton was probably struck close to New Year’s Day 1783, because the Great Siege of Gibraltar was lifted on February 7, 1783. It was struck during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, which lasted from December 1780 to May 20, 1784; therefore, it could not have been made in England for circulation in Holland but is a product of the Dutch Republic. The war would have also disrupted the Asiatic supply of metallic zinc and the raw ore from which it is refined; thus, possibly explaining why this piece is made of copper and not brass like the RISM.

237. Edward Hawkins, *Medalllic Illustrations of the History of Great Britain and Ireland to the Death of George II*, (The British Museum, London, 1885), p. 196.

238. Image is of jeton in author’s collection.



Figure 34. 1605 Dutch medallion-jeton commemorating the English Gunpowder Plot.



Figure 35. 1783 Dutch medallion-jeton depicting the foundering of the British warship HMS *Royal George* and Great Siege of Gibraltar.

The subject matter of the Royal George medallion-jeton depicts an English naval disaster. When the HMS *Royal George* was launched in 1756, it was the largest warship in the world and with over 100 guns considered the “eighteenth-century equivalent of a weapon of mass destruction.”²³⁹ In 1759 she sank the French warship *Superbe* with just one broadside. In order to relieve the Great Siege of Gibraltar, the *Royal George* was fitted out in Portsmouth and scheduled to sail at the end of August 1782 with a crew of over 800 men as part of Admiral Howe’s fleet. In order to keep sailors from deserting prior to departure, all leaves were cancelled while the ship remained anchored off Portsmouth, but wives,

239. Tony Booth, *Admiralty Salvage: In Peace & War 1906-2006*, (Pen & Sword, S. Yorkshire, 2007), p. 1.

girlfriends, children, and prostitutes were permitted onboard to bid the sailors a fond farewell. As a result, the number of souls onboard the great ship on August 29, 1782 was around 1,200. Amidst all this activity, the ship's carpenter was making routine repairs to the hull below the waterline. To conduct this work the ship was heeled over by rolling the starboard guns into the centerline. At the same time, casks of rum were being loaded on the lower port side, further destabilizing the vessel. The ship began to settle in the water and the sea rushed into the lower gun ports sinking her in a matter of minutes with the loss of around 900 people, including over 300 women and 60 children. For weeks after the disaster the bodies of the dead washed ashore. The ship was so large that her masts stuck out of the water as she rested on the harbor floor—many of those who survived did so by climbing the rigging. Among the dead was Rear-Admiral Richard Kempenfelt, who drowned in his stateroom where he was trapped when the door jammed as the ship listed. The *Royal George* was the *Titanic* of its day—an unmitigated disaster.

The Royal George medallic-jeton can be characterized as a *leedvermaak medaille* or *spotpenning*—or “malicious pleasure medal” in English.²⁴⁰ While the theme of the Royal George *leedvermaak medaille*, the drowning of hundreds of innocent women and children, might be disturbing to our modern sensibilities, such themes were not uncommon on Dutch jetons and medals. The Dutch could not help but feel a sense of malicious pleasure in the foundering of the great warship along with the loss of Admiral Kempenfelt—similar to the feeling they had when news of the 1588 Spanish Armada's destruction reached Holland. In this way the jeton is similar to Karl Goetz's 1915 medal showing the sinking of the HMS *Lusitania*. Such an outlook may seem dark, but from the perspective of an Amsterdam merchant who lost everything when Admiral Rodney sacked St. Eustatius, it is understandable that a degree of *schadenfreude* might be felt.

The Rotterdam Museum characterizes the Rhode Island ship medal in its collection as a *spotpenning*.²⁴¹ This is because from the perspective of the Dutch, the British and Hessian soldiers outside Newport were mauled by the Americans who managed to escape their clutches by swiftly evacuating to safety. Far from showing the invincibility of the English, the Rhode Island ship medal exposed the English as vulnerable. If the rag-tag Continental Army could stand toe-to-

240. I am grateful to Dutch numismatic expert Henk Lassche from Beverwijk, Netherlands, for his assistance with this section.

241. Rotterdam Museum site: <https://museumrotterdam.nl/collectie/item/57187> Last checked July 22, 2018. The *Musée royal de Mariemont* in Mariemont, Belgium, which is just over 100 miles from Rotterdam, lists the RISM in its collection as a “jeton.” The British National Maritime Museum in London has two RISMs in its collection, one of which is listed as a “counter” made in the “Netherlands”—Object ID: MEC0519. See footnote 69.

toe with the Red Coats, certainly a professional army, like that of the Dutch Republic, would fare much better. The Dutch people, who largely supported the American cause, would have enjoyed looking at a medalllic-jeton depicting what was perceived as an English defeat. The reverse side of the RISM jeton shows Admiral Howe's command ship in his absence. This was another image sure to bring great joy to the hearts of Dutch patriots—the most feared English naval commander had taken himself out of the fight and publicly opposed his government's military policies. The feeling of the Dutch people would have been similar to what Northerners might have felt had General Robert E. Lee resigned his command and gone to Richmond to oppose Jefferson Davis and his cabinet—joy at the misfortune of an adversary.

The Dutch had a long history of producing medalllic-jetons with satirical, political, and religious images. They believed God would punish their enemies and lead them to victory. The RISM is low relief, brass, unsigned, poorly executed, the size of other jetons issued in the Dutch Republic, and depicts a subject matter that is not uncommon on Dutch jetons. The Rhode Island medalllic-jeton was struck in 1779 when the Dutch Republic and England were on a collision course for war. It would have been minted in Holland as a private venture for profit with images from the previous year that were sure to be popular with the common people—an English defeat at the hands of the militarily inferior, but much liked, Americans. As a medalllic-jeton, it would have been used in games of chance or played with by children, which explains why many show evidence of circulation or wear. The RISM was not, however, as claimed by Breen, an exchange medium like the *Nova Constellatio*, and it certainly never saw circulation in America. Far from being an English propaganda piece, it pokes fun at the misfortunes of the English. The Rhode Island ship medal has no claim as a legitimate American colonial numismatic item other than its depiction of an American Revolutionary War battle and, like the New York Theater token, has mistakenly been collected as an American numismatic item for over 150 years simply because it depicts something associated with America. The RISM is, however, properly part of the overall medalllic history of colonial America and should be collected along with the medals first organized by Betts and added to by others over the years.

The Continental Dollar: British Medals or American Coins?

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In recent years the history of the Continental dollar coin has become extraordinarily controversial. The question of its origins appeared to have been settled by Eric P. Newman's two studies of 1952² and 1959.³ However, in 2014, Catherine Eagleton, on the basis of documents from the Sarah Sophia Banks collection in the British Museum, argued that the Continental dollar coins were not coins struck in America, but medals struck in England.⁴ In 2018, Erik Goldstein and

1. The author would like to thank Jennifer Gloede of the Smithsonian Institution, Benjamin D. R. Hellings of the Yale University Art Gallery, Stuart Levine, Maureen Levine, Robert Rodriguez, Anthony J. Terranova, and the anonymous reviewers for their assistance and suggestions.

2. Eric P. Newman, "The 1776 Continental Currency Coinage," *Coin Collector's Journal* 19, no. 4 (July–August 1952): 1–9.

3. Eric P. Newman, "The Continental Dollar of 1776 Meets its Maker," *Numismatist* 72, no. 8 (August 1959): 914–25.

4. Catherine Eagleton, "Collecting America: Sarah Sophia Banks and the 'Continental Dollar' of 1776," *Numismatic Chronicle* 174 (2014): 293–301. The anonymous reviewer referred to in footnote 1, "who, despite the fact that we disagreed on some points of substance, provided useful feedback and suggestions which improved this article" was myself—I was recommended for the task through the good offices of the late Professor Ted Buttrey.



Figure 1. A Continental dollar. 38 mm. ANS 1911.85.7.

David McCarthy developed this argument further.⁵ Their evidence was the flyer that Eagleton had published; the statement in Du Simitière's commonplace book that the piece had been struck in London and was actually a medal; and the claims published in the *New Haven Gazette* and in a letter by Paul Revere that the piece had never circulated in America (Fig. 1).

This article will review the evidence and argue that Continental dollar coins are not medals of British manufacture. They have security edges. They are decorated with the floreate edge design copied from Spanish pillar dollars. No one would go to the extra bother of decorating a medal with a security edge. Although some Continental dollars have a “medal turn” die axis (12 o'clock), many have a “coin turn” die axis (6 o'clock) and still others have a die axis that is neither 6 nor 12 o'clock. A substantial number have clear signs of wear from circulation, indicating that these coins did indeed circulate. They were intended to circulate as coins, and since they circulated as coins they must have been made in America.

EVIDENCE OF COLONIAL MINTING TECHNOLOGY: THE RECORDS OF COUNTERFEITING

To determine whether the Continental dollars were produced in Europe or America it is important to understand the state of minting technology in the 13 colonies. The best evidence is provided by counterfeiting, because the manner in which counterfeits were produced would be described in the press and in legal documents with great care. This is not to say that the Continental dollars are counterfeits—counterfeiters do not sign their work the way “E. G.” did—but what can

5. Erik Goldstein and David McCarthy, “The Myth of the Continental Dollar,” *Numismatist* 131, no. 1 (January 2018): 48–55; Erik Goldstein, “The Myth of the Continental Dollar, Part 2,” *Numismatist* 131, no. 7 (July 2018): 36–46.

be learned about colonial counterfeiting indicates what coinage technology would be available to the makers of the Continental dollar.

One metal that American counterfeiters used to forge Spanish milled dollars was pewter. Forged pewter dollars are reported from 1739 onwards from the colonies of Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New York.⁶ Another metal used to forge Spanish milled dollars was brass or copper—examples of this practice begin in 1745 and are reported from Bermuda, New York, and Pennsylvania.⁷ If made out of brass or copper, the coins then underwent a process known as being “blanched” or “whited” so that they could pass as silver.⁸ An alternative was to dip the coin in mercury.⁹ Brass seems to have been preferred to copper because its lighter color was easier to conceal under silvering. The silvering soon rubbed off, but by that time the counterfeiters would be long gone.

Both these metals had their advantages and drawbacks: Brass has a higher specific gravity (8.50)—thus the counterfeits would be closer to the right size and weight, but the wrong color, which can be concealed to some extent by silvering; pewter has the right color, but a low specific gravity (7.40, versus 10.40 for silver).

In 1732 the Spanish started coining milled dollars at the mint of México, replacing the crude cob 8 reales. The coins had a floreate security edge, applied with an edge die. The technical term for the edge dies to apply the decoration using the Castaing machine is “milling stamps.” Mint Director Elias Boudinot used this term in a letter of December 3, 1795: “The stealing of dies, hubbs, milling-stamps, screws, presses, or other instruments used in the coinage . . . call for special provision from the Legislature of the United States.”¹⁰

This new security edge did not give North American counterfeiters much trouble. In January 1749 Spanish dollars were counterfeited in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and the flowers on the outside edge were described as clear as in the true.¹¹ In February 1768, the authorities searched a schooner and found “a small

6. Kenneth Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial Connecticut*. Numismatic Notes and Monographs 140 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1957): 35–36, 173, 189; Kenneth Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial New York*. Numismatic Notes and Monographs 127 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1953): 45; Kenneth Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial Pennsylvania*. Numismatic Notes and Monographs 132 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1955): 57, 100.

7. Scott, *New York*: 68, 127, 137, 140–41; Scott, *Pennsylvania*: 57, 71–73.

8. Scott, *New York*: 127, 137, 140–41. One formula for cold silvering contains 1 part silver chloride, 3 parts pearl ash, 1½ parts common salt and 1 part whitening. The metal is cleaned with soft leather or cork, moistened with clean water, and the mixture applied. After the metal is silvered, it is washed in slightly alkaline hot water. N. E. Spretson, *A Practical Treatise on Casting and Founding* 5th ed. (London: E. & F. N. Spon, 1888): 387.

9. Scott, *New York*: 68, 99; Scott, *Pennsylvania*: 55.

10. *American State Papers* 5 (Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1832): 358.

11. Scott, *Pennsylvania*: 72.

Bag containing all the Instruments for the milling and coining of Dollars, of the years 1763 and 1764.”¹² In May 1769 in New York City there was the sad case of the elderly man John Jubeart, who had been born on Staten Island. His counterfeit dollars were dated 1763 and 1761: “They are struck with a Die, the Edges milled, and appear of a dirty white Colour, tinged with yellow They ring well, and are supposed to be a compound of Copper and Tin, lightly silvered over, which may be easily scraped off.” Poor Jubeart died on the gallows.¹³ In July 1770, when another counterfeiter was arrested in Little Rest (now Kingston), Rhode Island, they found in his “Neserary House” tools for milling the edges of dollars and half joes.¹⁴ In December 1771, a suspected counterfeiter was arrested in Chatham, Connecticut, and was found with two sets of stamps, molds and milling instruments.¹⁵ Finally, in a letter of November 1772, a Justice of the Peace of Albany County reported to Governor Tryon of New York the seizure of counterfeiting instruments from two suspected counterfeiters in Arlington and Shaftsbury (Shaftsbury was at that time claimed by New York, but it is now part of the state of Vermont): “I have now in my Custody the Stamps Moulds Mills and several other Materials for coining of Dollars (dated 1760) one crown piece dated 1752, one dollar dated 1766, and one dated 1768 which are all counterfeits.”¹⁶

Robert D. Leonard has written: “Some Continental Dollars have ornamental edges, a technology known in Europe but unavailable in America in 1776.”¹⁷ This is not true. The evidence from counterfeiting records shows that the technique of milling ornamental edges was widely available in America, and counterfeiters had no difficulty manufacturing dollars and half joes with decorated edges. Erik Goldstein has asked: “Does evidence exist to support the use of an edge mill in America before 1777?”¹⁸ The answer is yes—there is ample evidence that edge mills were in use in America before 1777.

Counterfeiters in Ireland and Britain also made false Spanish dollars, with well-done edges—but the heyday of their activity occurred later. It was in the 1790s, when the Bank of England abandoned the gold standard, but pegged the currency to the Spanish dollar by countermarking dollars and setting their value at 4 shillings 9 pence sterling, that Spanish dollars entered general circulation. Of the

12. Scott, *New York*: 129–30.

13. Scott, *New York*: 132–34.

14. Kenneth Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957): 232.

15. Scott, *Connecticut*: 200.

16. Scott, *New York*: 152–53.

17. Robert D. Leonard, “Reader Thoughts on Continental Dollar Origins,” *The E-Sylum* 20, no. 45, Article 21 (November 5, 2017), http://www.coinbooks.org/v20/esylum_v20n45a21.html.

18. Goldstein, “Myth Part 2”: 44.

18 dollars reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme of England and Wales, 12 can definitely be ascribed to the post 1797 period by the countermarks they bear.¹⁹

The Continental dollars—struck in silver, brass, and pewter, with decorated edges—correspond to a technology that was widely used in America to produce counterfeits of Spanish milled dollars.

THE MANUFACTURING OF CONTINENTAL DOLLARS

Metals

There are four Continental dollars struck in silver, over a dozen in brass, and many more than a hundred in pewter. The Smithsonian Institution also has a small copper planchet.

Three sets of results for nondestructive testing on Continental dollars have been published. Michael Hodder had the first set performed on two brass and two pewter specimens in 1986, using X-ray fluorescence at ANACS; the coins were owned by Eric P. Newman, so his coins have now been tested twice, providing a useful control.²⁰ The second testing was performed by the Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC) in 2014 on two brass and four pewter specimens, plus a Treaty of Paris medal, that were being auctioned by Heritage Auctions as Part V of the Eric P. Newman Collection.²¹ Further testing was done by NGC in 2014 for the two silver, three brass, and seven pewter specimens, plus a Treaty of Paris medal, that were auctioned by Heritage Auctions as part of the Donald Groves Partrick collection. Table 1 shows the results (H = Hodder, followed by the page number; N = Newman, followed by the lot number; P = Partrick followed by the lot number; coins immediately above and below each other, marked with an asterisk, are two separate test results for the same coin):

19. The database of the Portable Antiquities Scheme can be searched at finds.org.uk. The most important hoard from Ireland and Britain that contains Spanish dollars is the Wellington Bridge Hoard from Ireland. Of its 342 coins, 111 were Spanish dollars from the Americas. Its date of deposit is 1807. Michael Kenny and Colm Gallagher, "The Wellington Bridge Hoard," *Small Change. Papers on post medieval Irish Numismatics in memory of Michael Dolley M.R.I.A.*, ed. Colm Gallagher. Numismatic Society of Ireland, *Occasional Papers* 36 (Dublin: Numismatic Society of Ireland, 1988), 49–52.

20. Michael Hodder, "The Continental Currency Coinage of 1776: A Trial Die and Metallic Emission Sequence," *The American Numismatic Association Centennial Anthology*, ed. Carl W. A. Carlson and Michael Hodder (Colorado Springs, CO: American Numismatic Association, 1991): 7–8. Hodder stated that the coins were owned by Newman and tested at ANACS in the catalog of the Norweb Collection, 3/24–25/1988, pp. 245–46.

21. Heritage Auctions [Eric P. Newman V] 11/14–15/2014: 3036–42.

Table 1. Metal-testing results.

	Fe	Cu	Zn	Sn	Sb	Ag	Pb	Source
Silver								
1-C		7%				93%		P.5838
3-D		10%				89%		P.5842
Brass								
1-A*	1.0%	75.7%	14.7%			2.8%		H.8
1-A*		79%	18%				1%	N.3036
1-A		73%	24%				3%	P.5834
1-A		78%	19%				2%	P.5835
1-B*	0.5%	73.6%	21.5%			0.8%	1.5%	H.8
1-B*		75%	22%*				1%	N.3037
1-B		89%	8%	2%				P.5836
Pewter								
1-B		1.1%		71.5%		1.0%	26.4%	H.7-8
1-B				87%	2%		9%	P.5837
1-C		1.6%		83.7%		1.4%	13.3%	H.8
1-C				85%	2%		11%	N.3038
1-C				91%	3%		4%	P.5839
1-C jumbo flan				92%	3%		3%	P.5840
2-C				91%	2%		5%	N.3039
2-C				81%	2%		16%	P.5841
3-D				90%	3%		5%	N.3040
3-D			2%	83%			10%	P.5843
4-D				89%	2%		7%	N.3041
4-D				86%	2%		10%	P.5844
5-D				88%	2%		7%	P.5845
Betts 614		2%		85%			9%	N.3042
Betts 614				93%	2%		1%	P.5846

* The lot description says that the metallic content is 22% tin (Sn). This cannot be correct—perhaps the symbols Zn and Sn got confused. A bell metal composition of 22% tin (Sn) would be too hard to strike with dies. The coin also has the yellow color of high zinc (Zn) content brass.

Hodder concluded that the pewter pieces were made of the pewter alloy Ley metal, not tin, and that the brass pieces were made of brass, not copper.²² This overturned the assertions by Breen, based on nondestructive tests done in 1963–64, that the pewter dollars were over 95% tin and contained no lead; Breen added that there were traces of antimony. Breen also entertained the possibility that the brass pieces might actually be pure copper.²³ Hodder's 1986 tests do not report any findings of antimony in the pewter specimens, but the 2014 NGC tests report that the pewter specimens contain 2–3% of antimony.

Newman's die study and die state analysis of the Continental dollars showed that the coins were first struck in brass, and then pewter was substituted.²⁴ Although Newman did not know of any strikings in pewter of his combinations 1-A and 1-B, one example of 1-A in pewter (with a plain edge) was discovered in December 2015,²⁵ and six or seven of 1-B in pewter are currently known.²⁶ Hodder reported that the pewter 1-B contained 26.4% lead,²⁷ the highest lead content reported for any Continental dollar. Perhaps this extraordinarily soft metal, almost a solder, was chosen to test the dies like a lead splasher. In 1952 Newman also listed a 3-D in brass, but this piece remains unconfirmed.²⁸

Was the shift from striking coins in brass to striking in pewter because pewter was cheaper? This does not necessarily seem to have been the case. Thorold Rogers' data shows that brass and pewter cost about the same in the period 1766–90. He reports prices for brass of 6–16 pence a pound [11–30 cents] and for pewter of 8–14 pence a pound [15–26 cents].²⁹ Posthumus's data shows that copper does cost more than tin, but not greatly so. (Since copper is the major component of brass, and tin the major component of pewter, the prices of copper and tin should

22. Hodder, "Continental Currency": 8.

23. Walter Breen, *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (New York: Doubleday, 1988): 110–11. Breen does not say where or by whom the nondestructive tests of 1963–64 were done.

24. Newman, "Continental Currency Coinage": 4–5.

25. It is now in the Resolute Americana collection.

26. See the census in the Partrick sale: Heritage Auctions [Donald G. Partrick] 1/8/2015:5837.

27. Hodder, "Continental Currency": 8.

28. Newman "Continental Currency Coinage": 5. Taxay and Breen listed a brass 3-D in their respective encyclopedias: Don Taxay, 1971 *The Comprehensive Catalogue and Encyclopedia of United States Coins* (New York: Scott, 1970): 193; Breen, *Encyclopedia*: 112 (Breen 1094). Hodder, "Continental Currency," does not list a 3-D in brass, and it is not mentioned in Newman and Levine's 2014 article: Eric P. Newman and Maureen Levine, "18th-Century Writings on the Continental Currency Dollar Coin," *Numismatist* 127, no. 7 (July 2014): 34–57.

29. James E. Thorold Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England* 7, part 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902): 400–1. Thorold Rogers' sterling prices have been converted into dollars at the rate of 54 pence equals one dollar.

track brass and pewter prices.) In the period 1772–80, copper was selling for 0.51–0.55 guilders per pound [20–22 cents], while tin was selling for 0.36–0.43 guilders per pound [14–17 cents].³⁰

Even during the first years of the Revolutionary War, the price of these non-ferrous metals does not seem to have risen to the “bullion point” (the point at which it becomes more profitable to melt down a coin than to circulate it) for the brass or pewter Continental dollars. Unfortunately, there is little price data about nonferrous metals—no such data can be derived from the daily newspapers nor from the price ceilings enacted by the revolutionary governments. The only data point found was when Lund Washington, who was managing the Mount Vernon plantation in his cousin George’s absence, sold the worm (the condensor) of an alcohol still (alcohol stills are constructed out of pure copper):

1777

Dec[embe]r To Mr. Wilkerson for the worm of an Old Still app[aratu]s

84 lbs at 3/ 14/12/-³¹

(The prefix “To” in the ledgers indicates that Mount Vernon is selling an item; the prefix “By” indicates that Mount Vernon is buying an item.) The price is in Virginia shillings (\$1 = 6 shillings), so the copper price was 50 cents a pound in December 1777, and Mount Vernon received the equivalent of \$48.67 in hard money for the worm of its old still. On the basis of the Thorold Rogers and Posthumus data, it is assumed that pewter would sell at approximately the same price. Brass and pewter dollars would then be worth, at melt, \$0.0185, or a little under 2 cents. The brass and pewter Continental dollars would not be worth more when melted down, as opposed to their face value, until March 1780, when Continental currency depreciation reached the point that \$1 in specie was equal to \$60 in paper.³²

Examination of the dies shows extensive die breaks—the die break above FUGIO on obverse 1, and the extensive circular die break on reverse die C. The transition to the softer metal may have been to avoid wear on the dies—the high lead content of the pewter 1-B suggests this was indeed the case. Nonetheless, although

30. N. W. Posthumus, *Inquiry into the History of Prices in Holland* 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1946): 375 (table 174), 383 (table 178). Guilders were converted into dollars by dividing the pure silver content of the guilder by that of the Mexican 8 reales—0.3138 troy ounces divided by 0.7859 troy ounces. This gives a value for the guilder of 40 cents.

31. Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, Series 5, Financial Papers: General Ledger B, 1772–1793, Image 300, https://www.loc.gov/resource/mgw5.115_0850_1638/?sp=300.

32. Pelatiah Webster, *Political Essays* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1791): 501–2.



Figure 2. A Charles III bust dollar. 38 mm. ANS 1934.1.565.

brass prices did not rise so substantially in value to make it economically worthwhile to substitute pewter for brass, at least not during the early part of the Revolution, there is an indication that brass became scarce because it was collected as an ordinance material (it was used to forge cannon). On September 9, 1776, when the Americans were about to evacuate New York City, they removed the bells from the churches and conveyed them away. This proved to be a great inconvenience during the Great Fire that broke out on October 21, 1776—because there were no bells, it was impossible to alarm the city.³³

Four Continental dollars in silver are known. They were overstruck on cut down Spanish colonial 8 reales (Fig. 2). The clearest evidence of this is the Garrett:1491-Ford I:2 specimen, and can be seen best in the black and white and color photographs in the Ford catalog. On the reverse of this specimen, starting in the ring for North Carolina, one can make out the letters DEI. Starting in the ring for New York one can make out the letters CA. A line can be drawn, bisecting the coin almost precisely, from the C of CA to the D of DEI. This arrangement of letters, in particular the line from C to D, corresponds to the lettering on Spanish colonial 8 reales (“duros”) of 1772 onwards, which bore the inscription .CAROLUS.III._DEI.GRATIA. By contrast, on the 8 reales (“duros”) from Spanish metropolitan mints a line drawn from the D of DEI bisecting the coin does not hit the C of CAROLUS, but instead would end up between the A and R of that word.

Spanish 8 reales were struck to a weight standard of 416–417.7 grains. Actual specimens, as one might expect, are lighter than this—a histogram of those in the ANS peaks 410–414.9 range, with the average being 413.7 grains. The four Continental dollars in silver have the weights 362.7 grains (Ford I:7), 363.8 grains (Heritage [Newman] 5/16–17/2014:30423), 373.5 grains (Stack’s [Corrado Romano] 6/16/1987:24) and 376.3 grains (Garret 1491–Ford I:2–Heritage 1/7–12/2015:5838). These coins weigh 87.7% to 90.9% of an 8 reales (using the

33. “Occupation of New York City by the British,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 1 (1877): 250, 254 (this is the diary of Pastor Ewald Schaukirk).

413.7 grain figure), thus they were cut down by about 10%. This 10% loss is perhaps due to the filing down of the planchets after striking to the diameter of the outer ring. NGC's analyses of the two silver specimens in the Partrick collection determined that one had a silver content of 93%, the other 89%. If the Continental dollar pieces were struck in sterling silver, they would be 925 fine; if they were struck over pillar dollars, 917 fine; if they were struck over bust dollars, 903 fine. The NGC analyses were not done with such precision that it can be assumed from the 93% result that the piece is 930 fine silver. What can be concluded from the NGC results is that the Continental dollar silver pieces contain something in the range of 89–93% silver.

The Smithsonian Institution has a small size copper planchet (Smithsonian catalog number 69.166.1) struck with the dies for Newman 2-C. It weighs only 41 grains. According to Taxay, it was obtained from Stack's. The piece appears to be a worn counterfeit farthing, which was used as a set up piece or trial strike to test the dies. No trace of an undertype is visible.³⁴

WEIGHT STANDARDS AND PLANCHET PREPARATION

The preparation of the planchets can be understood by studying the “jumbo flan” Continental dollar. The diameter of this piece was given as 42 mm when it was sold in the Partrick sale. I was able to examine this piece in August 1996; as of 2018 it forms part of the Resolute Americana collection.³⁵ The piece is one of only three Continental dollars with a plain edge (the others are a Newman 1-A in pewter, discovered in December 2015, and a Newman 4-D that was auctioned as Ford I:9). On the edge, there is evidence of a casting sprue at 12 o'clock on the coin (the coin is medal turn).³⁶ This means that the pewter Continental dollars were prepared on cast flans; perhaps the minters did not have access to a cutting out press to prepare the planchets, or perhaps they preferred not to use one. A cutting out press would cause metal hardening, which would increase the wear on the dies. The planchets were struck by the dies, and then filed down to their

34. Don Taxay, *Encyclopedia*: 193; Breen, *Encyclopedia*: 112 (catalog number 1093). I have seen a color photograph of this piece by William C. Noyes—number 71046. The Smithsonian Institution provided me with the weight of the specimen.

35. Breen, *Encyclopedia*: 111 (catalog number 1090); Heritage Auction [Donald G. Partrick] 1/8/2015:5840.

36. The brass 1-B in the Norweb sale was reported as having evidence of a mount skillfully removed at 12 o'clock (Bowers & Merena [Norweb] 3/24–25/1988:2452). It would be interesting to examine the edge of this piece to determine if it actually was a mount removed or a casting sprue remaining as an artifact of this method of planchet preparation.

final size. Continental dollars tend to be (the “jumbo flan” piece is the exception) extraordinarily close to the size of the outer ring on the obverse; they do not “slop over” the outer ring. An explanation for this would be filing to the size of the outer ring. The filing would then be covered over by the edge decoration. This would be an extraordinarily labor-intensive process, but it would be in line with the other measures taken by the coiners to prevent clipping and filing of the Continental dollars, namely the outer rings on obverse and reverse and the floreate edge. Clipping and filing were a very real danger in America of the 1770s and 1780s. This is shown by the heavily clipped guineas and half joes that are known with Ephraim Brasher’s countermark.

This labor-intensive process would make no sense in technically advanced, industrialized Britain; it did, however make sense in America.

Weights have been obtained for 115 pewter specimens (Chart 1):

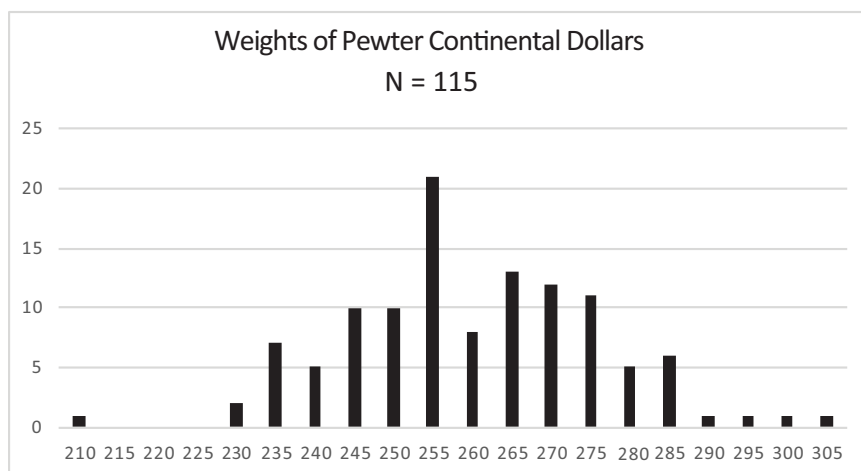


Chart 1. Weights of pewter continental dollars.

The histogram has a high peak at the interval of 255–259.9 grains. Perhaps this is a result of the peculiar method of preparing the planchets by filing them down to the outer ring; this resulted in a tighter weight control than normally would be the case.

Weights were obtained for 14 brass specimens (Chart 2):

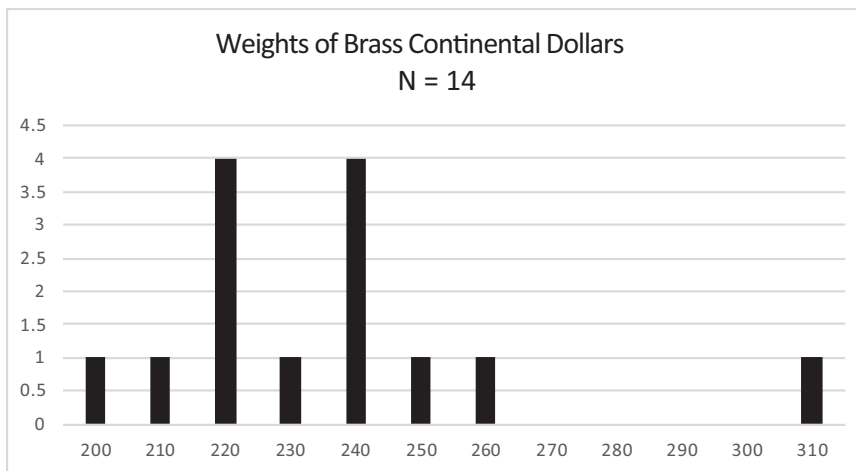


Chart 2. Weights of brass continental dollars.

With peaks at 220–240 grains among the 14 coins for which weights have been recorded, it appears that the brass and pewter specimens were struck at approximately the same weight standard of around 255 grains. This weight, below that of the 363–377 grains of the silver pieces, is the result of pewter’s and brass’s lower specific gravity. If the coins were of the right size and color, they would circulate. It was only sophisticated merchants, not naïve farm boys, who would pull out the scales to check whether the coins were silver or not.

DIE ENGRAVING AND INSCRIPTIONS

The lettering was cut by hand, not with letter punches.³⁷ The Treaty of Paris Medal, which imitates the design of the Continental Dollar, also appears to have hand cut lettering. Again, this is a labor-intensive process that shows that both pieces were made in a location that was, by comparison with Great Britain, technically unsophisticated.

The manufacture of the dies was a botched job. The dies were extensively recut several times, resulting in significant die states to which Newman assigned

37. David McCarthy seems to have been the first to make this observation. “More Continental Dollar Research,” *The E-Sylum*, 21, no. 30, Article 7 (July 29, 2018): “The Continental dollar is hand-engraved, without letter punches.” Newman and Hodder, by contrast, refer to punches. I agree that the lettering is hand-engraved, and I sought the opinions of others: Stuart Levine, Maureen Levine, and Robert Rodriguez agreed that the lettering is hand-engraved and not punched.

separate numerals or letters (Newman reverse varieties A, B, and C, and Newman obverse varieties 4 and 5), as if they were separate dies, resembling what Noe did for the Massachusetts silver. Furthermore, the dies contain many errors. CURRENCY was misspelled as CURENCY and CURRENCEY; New York was misspelled as N.YORKE; on obverse 4, the date was initially written as 7776;³⁸ Massachusetts was placed to the left of New Hampshire, and then to its right. Pennsylvania was abbreviated as PENNSILV, a misspelling that Benjamin Franklin also used on Pennsylvania paper money to guard against counterfeiting.³⁹ Rhode Island was erroneously placed between Connecticut and New York, but this mistake originated with the Continental currency paper money issue of February 17, 1776, so it cannot be blamed on our inept engraver. The erroneous positioning of Massachusetts is forgivable too. Before 1820, Maine was part of Massachusetts, so it is a matter of opinion whether the geographical position of the states from north to south should begin “New Hampshire, Massachusetts,” or “Massachusetts, New Hampshire.” But this is the sort of confusion that someone with detailed geographic knowledge of America would be more likely to make than someone in Britain. The lettering was also mishandled, for a close examination shows frequent recutting of the lettering.⁴⁰

The numerals on the sundial on the obverse of the Continental dollar were arranged incorrectly, using odd alternatives such as “IIX” instead “VIII” for eight. Newman, Hodder, and Spilman have all discussed the complex question of the sundial arrangement.⁴¹

This inept preparation would be unlikely in sophisticated Britain, which had, if anything (given the vast number of counterfeit halfpence) far too many skilled diesinkers.

Both Newman⁴² and Eagleton⁴³ point out that the Continental dollars do not bear a mark of denomination. Actually, eighteenth century coins do not bear a mark of denomination as a matter of course—although Spanish coins do bear

38. See the lot description in Ford I:9.

39. Eric P. Newman, “Unusual Printing Features on Early American Paper Money,” *Monety of Pre-Federal America* ed. John M. Kleeberg. Proceedings of the Coinage of the Americas Conference 7 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1991): 71; Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America* 5th ed. (Iola, WI: Krause, 2008): 334.

40. For examples of the recutting, see the descriptions in the Norweb catalog: Bowers & Merena 3/24–25/1988:2451, 2454, 2456.

41. Newman, “Continental Dollar Meets its Maker”: 924; Michael Hodder, “Roman Numerals on Continental Currency Coin Dies,” *Colonial Newsletter* 28, no. 2 (June 1988): 1027–28; James Spilman, “Those Fugio Sundials,” *Colonial Newsletter* 28, no. 2 (June 1988): 1028–29; Hodder, “Continental Currency”: 8, 13–14.

42. Newman, “Continental Currency Coinage”: 2.

43. Eagleton, “Collecting America”: 296.



Figure 3. Prussian thaler of post-1750. 37.5 mm. ANS 0000.999.30650.

marks of denomination, British and French coins do not, whether struck in precious or in base metals. It was only during the French Revolution that French coins adopted marks of denomination.

Prussian coinage provides a telling example (Fig. 3). Prior to 1750, Prussia's thalers did not bear a mark of denomination and were struck according to the Leipzig standard. In 1750, the weight of the Prussian thaler was reduced to the Graumann standard. These new thalers of lower weight bore a denomination "EIN REICHSTHALER."⁴⁴ It became necessary to say a coin was a thaler once the weight had been so substantially reduced that it was no longer the thaler that everyone had grown up with. Spain too put marks of denominations on its coinage—but Spain debased the fineness of its silver coinage twice over the course of the eighteenth century (in 1732 and 1771), and its gold coinage three times (in 1732, 1771, and 1785). Coin issuing authorities only put denominations on their coins once they start cheating.

The coin's inscription reads CONTINENTAL CURRENCY (in its various spellings). What is to be understood by this word? It is helpful, when trying to determine the eighteenth century meaning of words, to have recourse to Dr. Samuel Johnson's wonderful *Dictionary of the English Language*. Under CURRENCY, definition number 6, Johnson explains: "The papers stamped in the English colonies by authority, and passing for money."⁴⁵ In other words, the Continental dollar is not saying on its face that it is a medal—it is saying the exact opposite, that it is designed to pass as money.

The coins bear a floreate edge, the security edge that was applied to the Spanish milled dollars of 1732–72. (The Spanish milled dollars that were issued from 1772 onwards and that were circulating in 1776 had a different type of security edge, a design of circles and squares.) The floreate edge was also used for the com-

44. *Vom Thaler zum Dollar* (Munich: Staatliche Münzsammlung, 1986): 145–47.

45. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Knapton, 1755).

mon gold coins that circulated in eighteenth century America, the Brazilian 6,400 reis (known to English speakers as joes or half joes). The floreate edge would have been applied as the final step, using milling stamps, possibly with a version of the Castaing machine. A Castaing machine would explain why, on two of the silver specimens (see the lot descriptions for Ford I:2 and 7), the edge decoration is incomplete in places. Newman's assertion that the same milling stamps were used on the Continental dollar, the Nova Constellatio patterns, and one of Getz's 1792 "Washington President I" patterns, because they all have floreate edges, and thus must all have been struck in Philadelphia or Lancaster, is not credible.⁴⁶ The floreate edge was a standard security edge, copied from the old Spanish pillar dollars, and generally applied to silver and gold coins.

GRADES AND CIRCULATION

Continental dollars frequently occur in circulated grades. Anthony Terranova has informed us that Continental dollars show up 50%/50% circulated/uncirculated; maybe even 60% circulated. He further observed that the wear is the type of wear from circulation, not from someone mishandling a medal. PCGS and NGC have assigned these grades to Continental dollars (Table 2).

Table 2. Grades of Continental dollars.

Grades	EF-45 or Less	AU-50-58	MS-60 or More
PCGS CoinFacts	41 grading instances	40 grading instances	48 grading instances
NGC	13 grading instances	13 grading instances	61 grading instances

Even disregarding the "slider" grades of AU-50-58, there is a significant number of pieces that show evidence of wear. However, it is true that there are many pewter Continental dollars that show no significant traces of circulation. This does not mean that the coins never circulated—it means that circumstances caused newly minted coins to be retained in a hoard. There are two parallel instances from America from the same time period. The Virginia halfpence and the Fugio cents stopped circulating soon after their manufacture, resulting in significant ac-

46. Newman "Continental Currency coinage": 4.

cumulations of uncirculated coins.⁴⁷ But there are numerous circulated examples of both Virginia halfpence and Fugio cents too. Something similar must have happened with the Continental dollars.

THE PROBLEM OF THE MISPELLINGS

The misspellings—CURENCY, CURRENCEY, YORKE—provide a clue to the identity of the engraver of the Continental dollar. The engraver's first language probably was not English. Speakers of different foreign languages have different problems with English words. For example, the Dutch have difficulty with "th" and "sh." Russian speakers confuse or even omit entirely definite and indefinite articles, because the Russian language (like Latin) does not use articles. German speakers have trouble with the letters "w" and "v," both of which exist in their language but are pronounced like the English "v" and "f."

What would have been the first language of the engraver of the Continental dollar? It is a language with a silent final "e." It is also a language where "e" can be used to lengthen the pronunciation, as can be done in English—just as in the words "rid" and "ride" the presence or absence of the final "e" signals whether the main vowel is short or long. It is also a language where words derived from the Latin "currere," to run, can be spelled with only a single "r."

What languages have derivatives from "currere" with a single "r"? Spanish, Portuguese and Italian have all preserved the double "r" from Latin. In Spanish the words for "current" and "to run" are "corriente" and "correr"; in Portuguese the words "corrente" and "correr"; in Italian, "corrente" and "correre." Then there is the exception: French. In French the words have a single "r": "courant" and "courir."

What languages have a silent final "e"? English, of course; but the other one is French, with words like "élève," "école," "Cologne." French is more consistent than English in using final "e"s for compensatory lengthening—whereas English romanizes the names Lenin and Stalin without a final "e," French emphasizes that the final syllables in those names are lengthened by adding a final silent "e"—"Lénine," "Staline."

Both CURENCY and CURRENCEY are logical misspellings for a French person to make—used to "courant," they would be inclined to write a single "r" rather than a double "r," and would want to show the lengthened pronunciation

47. Eric P. Newman, "Additions to Coinage for Colonial Virginia," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 10 (1962): 138–39; Philip L. Mossman, *Money of the American Colonies and Confederation: A Numismatic, Economic and Historical Correlation*. Numismatic Studies 20 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1993): 198.

of “CY” by adding another “e”—“CEY.” The French preference for this spelling is reflected in the name of one of the leading Huguenot families of New York—the De Lancey family, whose former farm is commemorated by a major city thoroughfare, Delancey Street.

Finally, there is the misspelling “Yorke.” A search through Google Books shows that the spelling “New Yorke” is common in English documents in the seventeenth century, but extremely rare to nonexistent in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, tables were published to help French children in primary schools with the pronunciation of difficult words. One of these words was “New York.” The phonetic spelling was given in these guides as “neu-iorke.”⁴⁸ “New Yorke” is a logical misspelling for a French speaker, who would add a final silent “e” to lengthen the vowel.

The pattern of the misspellings on the Continental dollar indicate that the first language of the engraver of the Continental dollar was not English, but French. The fact that the inscription was repeatedly misspelled in this manner also indicates that the coins were not struck in London, which at this time was an overwhelmingly Anglophone city.⁴⁹ Much of the population of New York City, by contrast, does not speak English as its first language, and this was as true in the eighteenth century as it is today. In the eighteenth century many New Yorkers spoke Dutch, or French, or German as their first language. In the 1790s, when the Francophone population swelled as refugees fled the Haitian Revolution, the city was able to support two French newspapers.⁵⁰ Appropriately enough, when New York provided the United States with a president for the first time—Martin Van Buren—it was a president whose first language was not English, but Dutch.

THE TREATY OF PARIS MEDAL

The Treaty of Paris Medal (Betts 614, BHM 256) (Fig. 4) is a medal in pewter that copies the reverse of the Continental dollar; it imitates the Continental dol-

48. “Pronunciation Figurée,” *École Normale* 2, no. 13 (January 29, 1860): 208; Mignon, *Méthode de Lecture des Écoles Primaires* (Paris: Hachette, 1873) 18th Table. These instances were located by searching the digital library of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Gallica.

49. The memoirs of Giacomo Casanova are instructive in this regard. Casanova was able to travel all over eighteenth century Europe—Madrid and Constantinople, Paris and Moscow, Dresden and Wolfenbüttel—with a knowledge of French. Only in London did he encounter serious language difficulties because he knew little English and few of the British spoke French.

50. John M. Kleeberg, “The Theatre at New York,” *The Token: America’s Other Money*, ed. Richard G. Doty. Coinage of the Americas Conference 10 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1994): 32–33.



Figure 4. Treaty of Paris medal. 37.5 mm. ANS 1933.105.6.

lar even so far as to have a floreate edge and the misspelling “YORKE.” On its obverse it has the inscription *FELICITAS BRITANNIA ET AMERICA* (“Happiness Britain and America”), and in the exergue, *MDCCLXXXIII/SEPT 4*. This is not the actual date of the Treaty of Paris, which was signed on September 3, 1783. The obverse depicts America, represented as an Indian maiden, holding hands with Britannia; in the background is London, with, from left to right, St. Paul’s Cathedral, the Monument to the Great Fire of London, and what is probably meant to be the Tower of London. (The domed turrets at the four corners of the Tower today appear quite squat, but pointier turrets can be seen in some eighteenth century views.) Behind is a ship at a wharf, indicating that happiness will consist in the revival of trade after the conclusion of peace. Like the Continental dollar itself, the lettering is hand cut, not applied with punches. Weights are known for seven specimens: 341.9 (Stack’s Bowers 11/10/2015 [John W. Adams]:23089), 344.9 (Garrett:1494), 345.4 (Heritage 11/14–15/2014 [Eric P. Newman]:3042), 350.8 (ANS 1933.105.6), 353.6 (Ford I:10), 358.6 (Norweb:2459), 367.1 (British Museum M.4883). With weights ranging from 341.9–367.1, the planchets are heavier than the pewter Continental dollars, which were struck to a weight standard of 255 grains.

There is general agreement that Karl Spener’s letter to Benjamin Franklin of May 26, 1783, refers to the Continental dollar coins. Since the Treaty of Paris medals must date from September 3, 1783, or later, and the Continental dollar coins were known to exist no later than May 1783, the Treaty of Paris medals were struck after the Continental dollar coins.

Given the handcut letters, the crudeness of the figures (a medal this crude would be impossible to sell in sophisticated London of the 1780s⁵¹), and the er-

51. The Admiral Vernon medals are crude, but they are products of 1739–41. As can be seen by looking through Laurence Brown’s *British Historical Medals*, by the 1780s British medals had become much more sophisticated.

roneous date, everything suggests that this is an early medal that was struck in America, imitating the Continental dollars that from 1783 onwards were no longer hermetically sealed off in New York City. The style of its figures has much in common with what has been identified as the first Indian Peace Medal of the United States (ANS catalog number 1947.134.55), which it has been suggested was minted for the Treaty of Hopewell with the Cherokee Nation (Fig. 5).⁵²

For what occasion was this medal struck? The news of the Treaty of Paris reached America by the end of October (Boston, on October 23rd; New York City, by October 30th; Philadelphia, by November 1st).⁵³ There would have been enough time for a quick working diesinker to produce pieces before Evacuation Day on November 25th, and to sell them to departing British and Hessian officers. The medals would then be one of those cheap souvenirs that New Yorkers like to foist upon tourists, similar to the plastic Checker taxicabs and gimcrack Statues of Liberty that can be bought in stores around Times Square or at New York City airports. However, there are also reports of elaborate celebrations held in January 1784, when the full text of the treaty had arrived. One planned for Philadelphia had to be delayed to May 3, 1784 because of an unspecified unfortunate accident, but it was illustrated with transparent paintings made by Charles Willson Peale.⁵⁴ These American celebrations would also have provided a suitable occasion to sell the medals.

The handcut letters and the crudeness of the dies suggest that the Treaty of Paris "Felicitas" medals were struck in America, and are another argument that the Continental dollars themselves were struck in America.

NEWMAN'S IDENTIFICATION OF ELISHA GALLAUDET AS THE ENGRAVER OF THE CONTINENTAL DOLLARS

In an article published in the *Numismatist* in August 1959, Newman proposed the engraver Elisha Gallaudet as the person represented by the initials "E. G. FE-CIT" (Latin for "E. G. made it") on Newman's obverse 3.⁵⁵ He was a member of a French Huguenot family (the French version of his name is Élisée). The most distinguished member of the family proved to be Elisha's great-nephew, Thomas

52. Damon G. Douglas, "The First United States Indian Chief Peace Medal," *Numismatist* 58, no. 7 (July 1945): 689–93; R. W. Julian, "The First Indian Peace Medal of the United States," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 21 (1976): 257–259.

53. "The Treaty of Paris, 1783," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* 16, no. 3 (September 1883): 260.

54. "Treaty of Paris": 260.

55. Eric P. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 915–26.



Figure 5. Die trial for the first US Indian Peace Medal. 74 mm. ANS 1947.134.55.

Hopkins Gallaudet (1787–1851), who was the founder of the first school in America for the training of the deaf; Gallaudet University is named for him.⁵⁶

Elisha Gallaudet was born in the Huguenot settlement of New Rochelle, New York, in 1730.⁵⁷ Gallaudet made engravings for New York's paper issue of February 16, 1771, for which he was paid £22/1/- (\$55.12½).⁵⁸ He also made the engraved headpiece and backs for the New York City Waterworks notes of 1774–76; for this he was paid £7 (\$17.50).⁵⁹ The printer of both the 1771 New York notes and the 1774–76 Waterworks notes was Hugh Gaine. Gallaudet engraved bookplates, including one for the New-York Society Library in 1757 (founded 1754), for which he was paid £3/10/- in New York currency (\$8.75)⁶⁰ and also a portrait frontispiece for a New York reprinting of 1774 of a life of the preacher George Whitefield that was originally published in London in 1772.⁶¹ Gallaudet's portraits of the faces of Whitefield, Mercury, and Athena (the supporters of the arms of the New-York Society Library) are crude and inept, suggesting that he was not comfortable with depicting the human figure, particularly the face. Newman points out that the Continental dollar was created using the techniques of an engraver, not a diesinker: "The sundial's rod or style [the gnomon] is unnaturally filled in with a series of parallel lines such as an engraver of cuts would do. The ground on which the sundial rests is given substance only by a series of parallel lines in the manner of an engraving."⁶² The signature "E. G. FECIT" is also one of the customary ways in which engravers signed their work in the eighteenth century.

Gallaudet probably fled New York City for New Jersey shortly before the city fell to the British, and died in Freehold, New Jersey, in 1779. (Hugh Gaine, the printer of the New York paper money, also fled to New Jersey between September 9 and September 21, 1776, although he later moved back to British occupied New York and resumed printing his newspaper.⁶³) Gallaudet died intestate, his estate

56. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 923.

57. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 921.

58. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 917.

59. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 918–19.

60. Erin Schreiner, "A History of the New York Society Library's Bookplates," Friday, August 1, 2014, <https://www.nysoclib.org/blog/history-new-york-society-librarys-bookplates>. Newman gives an incorrect date, 1752, for Gallaudet's creation of the bookplate. The New York Society Library still exists today.

61. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 921–23.

62. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 924.

63. Ruma Chopra, "Printer Hugh Gaine Crosses and Re-Crosses the Hudson," *New York History* 90, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 271–85.

being worth £121/16/6 (\$324.87).⁶⁴ The small value of the estate suggests that Gallaudet did not take any of the dies or machinery for making the Continental dollars with him to Freehold.

Because Freehold, New Jersey, is approximately equidistant between Philadelphia (52 miles) and New York (50 miles), and because Gallaudet had a nephew, Peter Wallace Gallaudet, who resided in Philadelphia, Newman thought it possible that some of Gallaudet's activities could have been done in Philadelphia.⁶⁵ Newman also believed it possible that Gallaudet prepared the engravings for the February 17, 1776, Continental notes, although in his 1959 article he did not express this as something entirely certain: "It is possible that the cuts for the continental money were made by the same person who cut the dies for the coinage."⁶⁶ By the time Newman published the first edition of *The Early Paper Money of America*, he would assert with regard to the February 1776 issue: "Devices and borders of the fractional bills were cut by Elisha Gallaudet, then of Freehold, New Jersey."⁶⁷ Newman had no solid basis for this conjecture, nor for his assumption that Gallaudet had already moved by then to Freehold, New Jersey. It is more probable that Gallaudet only fled New York City just before it was occupied by the British, as did Hugh Gaine.⁶⁸ Newman himself later changed his mind, writing of the February 17, 1776, Continental currency issue in the 5th edition: "Devices and border cuts of the fractional bills were prepared by Elisha Gallaudet, then of New York City before he moved to Freehold, NJ, just before the British occupied New York City."⁶⁹ This too is improbable. The Continental currency was printed in Philadelphia by Hall and Sellers. There would be no reason for them to employ an engraver who resided 90 miles away, when there was plenty of good local talent.

Once he attained refuge in Freehold, it is unlikely that Gallaudet would traipse off to the residence of Congress, whether that be Philadelphia or Lancaster or Annapolis, to carry out minting operations.⁷⁰ New Jersey during the Revolutionary War was a dangerous place. Marauding Hessians roamed the countryside, putting sabers to people's throats and declaring: "Sir, I am a Hessian! You must immediately bring me a good mounted guide who knows the country to the right. Then

64. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 923; *Documents Relating to the Colonial and Revolutionary History of the State of New Jersey* ["New Jersey Archives"] 1st Series, 34: *Calendar of New Jersey Wills, Administrations* 5 (1931): 204. This is New Jersey money of account with the dollar being worth 7/6, as opposed to New York money of account with the dollar being worth 8/-.

65. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 923.

66. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 917.

67. Eric P. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, 1st ed. (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1967): 36.

68. Gaine fled New York City on or after September 9, 1776. By September 21, 1776, he was publishing a pro-American paper in Newark, New Jersey. Chopra, "Hugh Gaine": 171.

69. Newman, *Early Paper Money* 5th edition: 64.

70. Hodder seems to entertain this possibility. Hodder, "Continental Currency": 17-18.

you will come with me up to the bridge where Lord Cornwallis stands with the army, who wants to talk to you! Your whole courtyard is occupied by jägers. If you don't do what I want at once, I shall set fire to everything, but if you do, all your property shall be protected."⁷¹

It is important to note that all the positive evidence that exists about Gallaudet—his newspaper advertisements, his engravings of bookplates and paper money, the payments to him by New York colony and city governments and by the New York Society Library—locates him in New York City,⁷² and never in Philadelphia.

It is also noteworthy that Elisha Gallaudet was a Huguenot, born in the Huguenot settlement of New Rochelle. In New York, the Dutch Reformed Church continued to hold their services in Dutch until 1800, when they switched over to English.⁷³ The Huguenots held their services in French, but never changed to English—their Francophone church exists today as the Église Française du Saint-Esprit at 111 East 60th Street in New York City.⁷⁴ In this period, when the education of children was largely entrusted to the clergy, Gallaudet's early education would have been in French. Growing up in New Rochelle, his early years would have been spent in a Francophone environment. Every Sunday, he would have attended religious services held in French. The misspellings on the Continental dollar have been pointed out as those to which a French speaker is particularly prone. This adds to the case for Elisha Gallaudet as the engraver of the Continental dollars.

WAS THE \$1 DENOMINATION OMITTED FROM THE CONTINENTAL PAPER CURRENCY AND THE NEW YORK ISSUES TO LEAVE A NICHE OPEN FOR THE CONTINENTAL DOLLAR COIN?

Eric Newman argued that the omission of the \$1 denomination from the Continental Currency issues of July 22, 1776, through September 26, 1778, indicated that the Continental Congress intended for the Continental dollar coinage to substitute for the paper money.⁷⁵ In his *Early Paper Money of America*, first published in 1967, he expanded this argument further to explain the omission of the \$1 denomination from the August 13, 1776, issue of New York bills of credit.⁷⁶ The alternative explanation—that the \$1 denomination was omitted because of accel-

71. Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal* ed. Joseph P. Tustin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979): 26.

72. Newman, "Continental Dollar Meets its Maker": 917–23.

73. Randall Herbert Balmer, *A Perfect Babel of Confusion: Dutch Religion and English Culture in the Middle Colonies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

74. See its website at stesprit.org.

75. Newman, "Continental Currency Coinage": 1–2.

76. Newman, *Early Paper Money*, 1st ed.: 216.

erating inflation—was rejected by Newman on the grounds that Continental Currency depreciated versus Spanish silver dollars in 1776 by only 1.25%; in support of this, he referred to the depreciation tables in Pelatiah Webster's *Political Essays*.

Unfortunately, Newman's argument was based upon a misreading of Pelatiah Webster's text.⁷⁷ Webster's text actually states that a Spanish silver \$1 coin by January 1777 was worth \$1.25 in Continental currency—not, as Newman mistakenly thought, \$1.0127. (Newman also confused the difference between a discount and a premium.) Webster's data results in an annual inflation rate of 25%. Other data, also published by Webster, indicates that a Spanish silver \$1 coin by January 1777 was worth \$1.50 in Continental currency—equal to an annual inflation rate of 50%. In other words, \$1 Continental currency was worth 80 cents in silver at the end of 1776, a depreciation of 20%, or possibly 67 cents in silver, a depreciation of 33 1/3%.

(We lack for Continental currency the usual data that would be used to measure inflation, namely prices and wages. During this period merchants kept their books and circulated price lists ["price currents"] in specie equivalent moneys of account—the colonial pounds/shillings/pence whereby the dollar was worth 6 shillings in New England, 8 shillings in New York, 7 shillings 6 pence in the Mid-Atlantic states. By 1779 the practice was for wage rates to be quoted in specie terms as well. The "price currents" would also include a prevailing ratio of the depreciation of the Continental currency against specie. The price index constructed by Paul A. David and Peter Solar uses prices expressed in these specie equivalents and does not reflect the Continental currency inflation.⁷⁸)

The rapid depreciation of the Continental currency impelled the issuing authorities to omit lower denominations and to substitute instead potentially more useful higher denominations. Continental currency was printed in batches of eight notes; one of the denominations had to go. The choice was the lowest denomination, the dollar, and the substitute was the \$30 denomination. \$30 would be an attractive denomination because it could convert into round numbers in nearly all the colonial moneys of account, the only exception being the Mid-Atlantic 90 pence standard (Table 3).

77. Webster, *Political Essays*: 501–2.

78. Paul A. David and Peter Solar, "A Bicentenary Contribution to the History of the Cost of Living in America," *Research in Economic History* 2 (1977): 16, 51. Series Cc2 in the *Historical Statistics of the United States*, which supplies a Consumer Price Index for the years 1776–83, is a reproduction of the David-Solar Index, based on specie equivalents, and so does not reflect the depreciation of the Continental currency. *Historical Statistics of the United States Earliest Times to the Present*. Part C: *Economic Structure and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 3–158.

Table 3. Continental dollar conversion rates.

States	New England, VA	NY, NC	Mid-Atlantic (NJ, PA, DE, MD)	SC, GA
Value of the Spanish dollar	6 shillings (72 pence)	8 shillings (96 pence)	7 shillings 6 pence (90 pence)	4 shillings 8 pence (56 pence)
So \$30 is worth	£9	£12	£11/5/-	£7

The omission of the \$1 denomination is because of the high inflation rate and the impulse to substitute the attractive \$30 denomination, and not because of any intention by Congress to substitute the Continental dollar coinage for the paper money.

WAS CONGRESS INVOLVED IN THE COINAGE OF THE CONTINENTAL DOLLARS?

The *Journals of the Continental Congress*, and the *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, can now be searched online.⁷⁹ Records of Committees of Safety that were published in book form can be searched through Google Books.⁸⁰ Searches for references to the Continental dollars have proven fruitless. It is not possible to endorse Newman's assertions that "the foregoing facts put to rest any claim that the Continental Currency coins dated 1776 had no official connection" and "it is the first coin of our independent national government."⁸¹ There is no positive evidence that the Continental Congress was involved in the coinage of the Continental dollars, even though the coins have Congress's name on them. But how could this even be possible?

Nowadays the Federal Reserve or the Bank of England or the European Central Bank decides that the money supply will increase by so or so much. But in the early modern period, gold and silver coins were minted when private merchants brought bullion to the government mints and had that bullion minted into circulating coins. The minting of coin was determined by private merchants reacting to

79. Library of Congress, American Memory, A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html>.

80. An example is: *The Minute Book of the Committee of Safety of Tryon County [New York]* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1905).

81. Newman, "Continental Currency coinage": 2, 6.

the availability of bullion and the price of exchange on London. It was illegal for private merchants to have their own dies made and to strike their own coins—but even that did not stop some from doing so. In 1787 Ephraim Brasher, a private goldsmith, was minting doubloons bearing the seal of the United States and the State of New York. In a letter of October 27, 1795, Henry William de Saussure observed, “In this country, mints are said to be boldly erected at Baltimore, and elsewhere, professedly to imitate the coins of foreign countries, and to furnish a debased gold coin for the West India markets; and so much of the gold bullion which would be brought to the national mint, is carried to these private establishments, which degrade our national character.”⁸²

In 1775 there was a general collapse of the governing authorities in America.⁸³ Patriot mobs seized custom houses and government arsenals. The patriot leadership assumed government functions and often advanced money from their private funds for this purpose. For example, Elias Boudinot (later director of the U.S. Mint in 1795–1805), when he was Commissary for the Prisoners of War, advanced specie from his own funds to take care of the American prisoners of war in New York City. It was only after a bitter fight in Congress that he was repaid in specie, and not in depreciated Continental currency.⁸⁴ In 1781, when the Continental Army was on the verge of mutiny because of its lack of pay, Robert Morris paid them \$30,000 on his own account.⁸⁵ When a messenger brought the news of the surrender at Yorktown to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, the government did not have the hard money to pay the messenger’s expenses, so there was a quick whip round among the members of Congress and each chipped in a dollar.⁸⁶

Samuel Breck recalled how in 1776, when the Continental currency began to decline in value, patriotic persons stepped in and pledged to redeem the Continental currency at par in specie:

Early the next year [i.e., 1776], difficulties began to arise. The bills were sometimes refused, confidence was weakened, and depreciation followed. Then came from Congress and the Committees of Safety threatening resolutions, denouncing the refractory. It was the first serious emergency, and required prompt relief. Patriotic men, who had the means, stepped

82. *American State Papers* 5 (Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1832): 358.

83. Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 223.

84. W. Wallace Atterbury, *Elias Boudinot: Reminiscences of the American Revolution* [New York]: [Huguenot Society, 1894]: 23–25.

85. Atterbury, *Boudinot*: 31.

86. Atterbury, *Boudinot*: 32.

forward to redeem the bills at par; some of whom exchanged as much for a thousand pounds in silver for a like sum in paper.⁸⁷

It appears that certain patriotic parties stepped in and began to coin the Continental dollars, without Congress's sanction, perhaps anticipating that their actions would later be recognized and acknowledged by Congress. The loss of New York City and the supplies of Continental dollars, and perhaps also Elisha Gallaudet's premature death in 1779, put an early end to such plans.

IS THE CONTINENTAL DOLLAR A BRITISH MEDAL?

Eagleton assumed that "medals" has our modern sense of "medals," i.e., not a coin. But as David Fanning has pointed out, the word "medal" was used differently in the eighteenth century: John Pinkerton's *Essay on Medals* was almost entirely about coins.⁸⁸ Dr. Johnson resorts to an ambiguous definition: He defines medal as (1) An ancient coin and (2) A piece stamped in honor of some remarkable performance.⁸⁹

Is the Continental dollar a medal in the modern sense of the word? Does the Continental dollar correspond to what a British medal of the later eighteenth century looks like? The answer is: not at all.⁹⁰

British medals of the eighteenth century have human figures as major parts of their iconography; the Continental dollar has no human figures.

Medals do not, as a rule, have security edges; the Continental dollar has a security edge.⁹¹

British Historical Medals lists 481 medals for the period between 1760 and 1799, yet only 27 of those medals were struck in pewter. Brass is slightly more common, but they account for only 52 medals of the 481.

Continental dollars were struck in the three metals of silver, brass, and pewter; only 3 of the 481 eighteenth century medals listed in *British Historical Medals* were struck in silver, brass and pewter (BHM 71, 437, and 454).

87. Samuel Breck, *Historical Sketch of Continental Paper Money* (Philadelphia: A. C. Kline, 1863): 5–6.

88. David F. Fanning, "A Few Notes on Catherine Eagleton's *Numismatic Chronicle* Article on the Continental Dollar," *Colonial Newsletter* 55 no. 2 (August 2015): 4285–86.

89. Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*.

90. The basis for this comparison was arrived at by studying British medals of 1760–99 as cataloged in Laurence Brown, *British Historical Medals 1760–1960*. Vol. 1: *The Accession of George III to the Death of William IV, 1760–1837* (London: Seaby, 1980).

91. British eighteenth century medals with decorated edges are known, but they are unusual. The following examples of the period 1760–99 occur in *British Historical Medals*. Lettered edges: BHM 6, 312, 324. Scalloped edges: BHM 273–77, 289, 308. Grained: BHM 3. Corded: BHM 4. Milled: BHM 315.

British Historical Medals provides rarity ratings for the metals in which the pieces are struck, and the pewter specimens tend to be the rarest varieties—the commonest varieties are in bronze. By contrast, the pewter Continental dollar coins are the commonest varieties, the brass rare, and the silver extremely rare (only four known).

British medals of the eighteenth century are large in diameter and thick; the Continental dollar is comparatively small, struck to the size and weight of a dollar.

It is unusual for medals to be struck using more than one pair of dies; the Continental dollars were struck with four different obverse dies and two different reverse dies.

There are instances of medal dies being recut and the medal existing in two different die states—an example is the *Hoffnung* medal issued for the inauguration of the Victoria Bridge at Montreal in 1860, which exists with the cost given as \$5,000,000 and with the cost altered to \$7,000,000, because diesinker got the cost wrong.⁹² But this is still unusual. The Continental dollar dies, by contrast, underwent two major re-engravings of a reverse die (Newman reverse varieties A, B, and C) and a major re-engraving of an obverse die (Newman obverse varieties 4 and 5).

Medals do not need to bear dates and often omit them. Yet the Continental dollars have a date, prominently located at 6 o'clock on the obverse, exactly where dates are found on circulating coins.

The Continental dollar specifically says that it is not a medal: It calls itself "CONTINENTAL CURRENCY."

Appearance is everything with medals, so it is unusual for medals to be issued with major die breaks that destroy their intended effect. Yet the Continental dollars continued to be struck even though the dies developed major breaks. There is a large die break on Newman's obverse die variety 1, going from the O of CONTINENTAL, through the tops of the letters of FUGIO to the N and T of CONTINENTAL. There is an extensive circular die break going through the rings on Newman's reverse die variety D.

Again, appearance is everything with medals. Yet the Continental dollars have numerous misspellings; they have crude re-engravings to cover up these misspellings (the floral ornament concealing the final "Y" on Newman's variety 5); on obverse 4 even the date was initially engraved incorrectly (7776); the sundial is botched; the arrangement of the states is incorrect.

Medals are struck with a 12 o'clock die axis ("medal turn"); the Continental dollars were struck with that die axis, with a 6 o'clock die axis ("coin turn"), and also with many variant die axes that are significantly shifted away from 6 o'clock and 12 o'clock.⁹³

92. Scott H. Miller, "Medallic Memorials of the Visit of the Prince of Wales to North America in 1860," *Canada's Money* ed. John M. Kleeberg. Proceedings of the Coinage of the Americas Conference 8 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1992): 117–18.

93. Hodder has studied the die axes: Hodder, "Continental Currency": 8–9, 11–13, 15–16, 18.

British eighteenth century medals are often found struck in a pewter alloy called “white metal” or sometimes “Britannia metal.” Its relatively high antimony content—at least 5%⁹⁴—imparts a shiny luster. Cheap, shiny, and in thoroughly bad taste, white metal would prove to be the ideal material for the popular medal of the Victorian era. It was already in widespread use during the reign of George III.

By contrast, only small amounts of antimony have been reported for the pewter Continental dollars. The NGC analyses of 2014 found 2–3% antimony content. Hodder’s 1986 analyses did not find any, but it is unclear if his test was set up to search for it.⁹⁵ The metal content of the Continental dollars does not correspond to the metal content of British medals of the eighteenth century.

Medals are kept well preserved, as valuable souvenirs; yet Continental dollars frequently appear in circulated condition, and with the type of wear that is associated with monetary circulation, not just inept mishandling of medals.⁹⁶

The Continental dollars bear no resemblance to the medals of eighteenth-century Britain.

RECONCILING THE CONFLICTING EVIDENCE

Catherine Eagleton’s arguments that the Continental dollar was not issued as a coin, but produced in Europe for sale to collectors essentially relies on the flyer of ca. 1783–90 offering “American Medals” for sale at sixpence each and the catalog entry that the piece was “never current, struck on speculation in Europe, for sale in America.” Goldstein and McCarthy’s argument rests upon this, Pierre Du Simitière’s assertion of 1783–84, and the claim in the *New Haven Gazette* and in Paul Revere’s letter of 1790 that the pewter dollars never circulated in America.

We are presented with a conundrum. On the one hand, the physical makeup of the Continental dollars argues for American manufacture; yet on the other hand Eagleton, McCarthy, and Goldstein have put forward arguments based on literary evidence for European manufacture. Can this conflicting information be reconciled? (The literary evidence is reprinted below, chronologically arranged, in the Appendix.)

We begin with the passage that appeared in the newspapers at the end of June and the beginning of July 1776, reporting news from New York:

94. Spretson, *Casting and Founding*: 387.

95. Hodder, “Continental Currency”: 7–8.

96. This is based on the observations of Anthony J. Terranova.

“We hear it is proposed, that after three months, the currency of all copper coin, made of base metal, or wanting in weight, to be totally suppressed, and that the rest is to pass at the rate of 15 for an eighth of a dollar. And if it shall appear that there is not a sufficiency for common use, that it will all be called in, and a new impression struck of Continental copper coin, of a large size, twelve of which is to pass for an eighth part of a dollar, of which no other coppers are to pass current.”

This report is somewhat garbled, but lurking somewhere behind it may be a report of an actual Continental dollar. 1776 was a period of rapid inflation in Continental currency terms (25% per annum; 50% by some other sources). As would be repeated in 1861–63, fractional coinage disappeared from circulation and only the most lightweight coins continued in circulation. With minor coins disappearing, private individuals and the state governments issued paper currency in denominations of less than a dollar—“small change notes.” Newman’s *Early Paper Money of America* lists 21 private issues of small change notes during the years 1775–78.⁹⁷

The following notice, which appeared in the New York papers, gives an idea of the problem:

COMMITTEE CHAMBER

New York, June 20, 1776

WHEREAS it has been represented to this Committee, that printed tickets are circulating in this city for small change, which, if permitted, in our estimation, will have a tendency to depreciate the paper currency emitted by Congresses, Committees, or corporated bodies: *Therefore resolved*, That we will not receive in payment any tickets issued by any individuals, and we do recommend to the public not to encourage, by any means, the circulation of such tickets for the future.

Extract from the minutes.

Published by order of the Committee,

JOSEPH WINTER, Secretary.⁹⁸

With small change disappearing people looked for alternatives. One alternative appears to have been the Continental dollars issued in brass. When their sil-vering wore off—which would have happened after the coin changed hands only a

97. Eric P. Newman, *Early Paper Money* 5th ed.: 125, 126, 262, 289, 355, 420, 448–49.

98. *The New-York Journal, or The General Advertiser* Issue 1747 (New York: Thursday, June 27, 1776), p. [2], col. [4].



Figure 6. George III penny of 1797. 36 mm. ANS 1899.59.1

few times—they still would have circulated, but this time with their value reduced to New York pence (12 to a New York shilling/eighth of a dollar, 96 to a dollar). This seems to be what is meant by “a new impression Continental copper coin, of a large size.” If the brass Continental dollar seems big for a penny, remember that in the eighteenth century the penny was expected to be large—when Matthew Boulton coined pennies thirty years later they weighed 438 grains (Fig. 6). This item of June/July 1776 probably refers to brass Continental dollars circulating, with their silvering worn off, at the value of one New York penny.

These revaluations of circulating coinage were quite frequent in the colonial and Confederation period. Merchants would depreciate, or to use an eighteenth-century term, “cry down” or “cry up” a coinage. The Spanish pistareen is an example of how this could work. Pistareens (minted in metropolitan Spain) and full value 2 reales or quarter dollars (minted in the colonies of Spanish America) bear the same ostensible denomination—2 reales. Colonial merchants knew that the pistareen had one fifth less silver content. The pistareens continued to circulate, but at a lower “cried down” value, being valued at one fifth of a dollar (20 cents), while the Spanish American 2 reales were valued at one quarter of a dollar (25 cents). Likewise, during the Copper Panic of 1787 there were many different valuations for coppers as the market tried to discover a price at which the mistrusted coppers could begin circulating once again. The prices of some staples were officially fixed—bread and nails, for example—so changing the value of coins introduced a needed additional flexibility.

The item that was published in British newspapers in December 1776 is much clearer: “Letters from an officer of the 64th Reg. in York Island to his friend in town. “The Congress have established a Mint at Philadelphia, where they coin copper and silver pieces about the size of half a crown; In silver go for twelve shillings, in copper for fourteen pence.”

The officer of the 64th Regiment would be in a position to know what he was talking about; that regiment was one of Sir William Howe's troops that were oc-

cupying the city (York Island is an alternative name for Manhattan). The British occupation led to a rapid rise in the prices of food and firewood. The city had been cut off from its hinterland, and much of the city itself was destroyed in the fire of September 21, 1776. After a year of occupation food prices would rise by 800%.⁹⁹ Furthermore, this was inflation in specie terms, not a paper money debasement—there were too many British gold guineas chasing too few goods.

This inflation had not yet wreaked its havoc when our officer wrote, but it was already a time of extensive monetary confusion. The prices cited by the officer are in New York currency, not sterling.¹⁰⁰ The price of the silver Continental dollar has jumped from the normal 8 shillings to 12 shillings; the price of the brass/copper pence have jumped from the penny value they had at the end of June to over a shilling, i.e., fourteen pence. This makes perfect sense. With New York about to fall into enemy hands, people would pay any price to convert their assets into hard coin. A well-stocked wine cellar, which was a very desirable asset in early 1776, was much less valuable than hard coin that citizens could conceal on their persons when they fled to New Jersey. So the Continental silver dollar jumped in value in New York currency from 8 shillings to 12 shillings, while the brass dollars that had lost their silvering, which had been passing as pennies, were suddenly in demand at fourteen pence.

The size of “half a crown” is not entirely accurate. Continental dollars have been reported with diameters of 36.9, 37.8, 38, and 40.2 mm. A half-crown in the eighteenth century had a diameter of 34 mm, a crown 39 mm; but Britain had not minted half crowns and crowns since 1751. During the eighteenth-century British circulation was made up of coppers, gold guineas, and paper banknotes. Insofar as there was any silver available, it was shillings and sixpence worn down to be featureless silver disks, counterfeit versions of the silver coins, and dodgy “slap tokens.” It is thus understandable if the officer’s estimate of the size of the Continental dollars was only approximate (or as he put it, “about the size”).¹⁰¹ The officer was wrong about Congress establishing a mint and coining copper and silver pieces, but it was a reasonable assumption to make—the coins that were passing through his hands did have Congress’s name on them.

The next reference to the Continental dollars appears in Jonathan Odell’s “The Congratulation,” published in James Rivington’s *Royal Gazette* in New York

99. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*: 251.

100. Even at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, the Spanish dollar never rose higher than 6 shillings sterling.

101. Rob Rodriguez on the Continental Dollars, *E-Sylum* 20, no. 44, Article 13, October 29, 2017, http://www.coinbooks.org/v20/esylum_v20n44a13.html. Much of this discussion relies upon Rodriguez, including the data about the dollars with diameters 36.9 and 37.8 mm. The ANS specimen 1911.85.7 is reported with a diameter of 38 mm. The specimen in Notre Dame’s Robert H. Gore collection measures 40.6 mm.

City on November 6, 1779.¹⁰² This lengthy satiric poem mocks the failures of the American cause in that year (including the ignominious retreat from Rhode Island, well known to numismatists because of the Rhode Island ship medal), despite the reinforcements provided by the French Navy. The relevant passage reads:

“Whoever these important points explains,
Congress will nobly pay him for his pains,
Of pewter dollars, what both hands can hold,
A thimble-full of plate, a mite of gold;
The lands of some big Tory he shall get,
And strut a famous Colonel *en brevet*:
And last to honour him (we scorn to bribe)
We’ll make him chief of the *Oneida* Tribe!”

Odell is emphasizing that Congress only gives out worthless rewards: Congress can offer handfuls of pewter dollars, but in specie they are worth only a thimbleful or a mite; Congress can promise the lands of a big Tory, but the American forces will never capture those lands; and finally Congress provides meaningless vanities, such as Colonel *en brevet* or chief of the Oneida Tribe. A brevet colonel is an empty title—it allows the holder to be addressed as “colonel” but the holder does not have the right to command or to the pay of a colonel. The Oneida Tribe is referred to because it was the only one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) to embrace the Patriot cause.¹⁰³

Erik Goldstein asserts that this is not a reference to the Continental dollar—it is a reference to “locally produced counterfeits of the common Spanish colonial dollar.”¹⁰⁴ This cannot be so; the poem must refer to something that Congress is presumed actually to have done. And it is only the Continental dollar that has Congress’s name upon it. If Odell wanted to mock Congress by referring to something worthless, he would not refer to common pewter counterfeits of 8 reales—after all, everyone was passing them, not just Congress—he could just throw in another reference to the paper money. Besides, Congress was not pushing counterfeit 8 reales on people—rather, it was trying very hard to make people accept its increasingly worthless paper. Pewter dollars here must have a specific connection to Congress—and the Continental dollar is the only item that fits the bill.

102. Robert D. Leonard, Jr. first brought this poem to the attention of numismatic researchers.

103. Winthrop Sargent, *The Loyal Verses of Joseph Stansbury and Dr. Jonathan Odell*. Munsell’s Historical Series No. 6 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1860): 170, n. 69.

104. Goldstein, “Myth Part 2”: 42.

There is another aspect to note. All these details that involve the Continental dollar—Gallaudet's career, the June/July 1776 report of the Continental copper coin, the letter from the officer of the 64th Regiment, Odell's poem—originate from New York City. Two of them, the officer's letter from 1776 and Odell's poem of 1779, originate from within the British lines. The British captured New York City in two thrusts. On September 15, 1776, after landing at Kip's Bay, they seized most of the island of Manhattan.¹⁰⁵ On November 15, 1776, they captured the final rebel-held outpost, Fort Washington, renaming it "Fort Mifflin" in honor of the Hessian general Wilhelm von Mifflin.¹⁰⁶ From then until Evacuation Day, November 25, 1783, New York City was under British occupation and cut off from the United States. One British commander referred to it as "the Gibraltar of North America"—an impregnable offshore fortress.¹⁰⁷ And like Gibraltar, it was sealed off from the mainland. What happened in New York City stayed in New York City. What happened there would be largely unknown to people outside it—to Pierre Du Simitière in Philadelphia or to Josiah Meigs in New Haven or to Paul Revere in Boston.

Pierre Du Simitière in Philadelphia did know of the existence of the Continental dollar coin by 1783–84. But the next reports of the Continental dollar come from Europe—from Berlin in 1783, Cambridge in 1786, London in 1783–90. The flyer that Sarah Sophia Banks preserved talks about America with a tone of respect—there are no dismissive comments like "Rebel tin"—so it probably dates after American independence was recognized by Britain, i.e., 1783 or later. The Continental dollar has reached Europe, and there are quite a lot available, given that they can be sold for sixpence (11 cents) apiece. How could this happen?

In 1776 New York fell to the British very quickly. Hugh Gaine speedily left the city,¹⁰⁸ his work colleague Elisha Gallaudet probably did as well. There was no time to heft and ferry across to New Jersey heavy kegs filled with freshly struck pewter Continental dollars. So these pristine pieces fell into British hands. When the time came to leave New York, in 1781–83, the British grabbed anything that was not nailed down to take home with them as "souvenirs." If nothing else, kegs of Continental dollars would serve as good ballast for the ships, like the counterfeit halfpence that soon would be regularly shipped in the opposite direction.

This explains why Continental dollars became so common in Britain. But how did Continental dollars end up in Berlin, the first European site from which they were reported? Let us look around again at New York City during the occupation: Who was there?

105. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*: 240–41.

106. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*: 243.

107. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*: 246.

108. Chopra, "Hugh Gaine": 171.

“Tens of thousands of troops shifted in and out of the city—Waldeckers in their gaudy yellow trimmed cocked hats, huge mustachioed Hessians, kilted and tartaned Highlanders, black-capped Anspach grenadiers.” The number of troops occupying New York fluctuated between 5,000 and 20,000, and was 17,000 in December 1782.¹⁰⁹ The area that later would be known as Washington Heights was teeming with Germans—the Hessian troops of General Wilhelm von Knyphausen.

In other words, if you want to pick a city outside of Germany in the period 1776–83 that had a numerous German population, New York City is a very good choice. It thus makes sense that the first European place where the Continental dollar would appear was Berlin.

After evacuation day New York was once more connected to the United States, and it is perhaps then that Du Simitière learned of its existence. But some connections between New York City and the mainland had already been restored as the war wound down in the wake of Yorktown. Du Simitière had remained in Philadelphia during the British occupation of 1777–78 and befriended British officers. One friend was Captain Stephen Payne Adye of the Royal British Artillery. In August 1783, when Adye was stationed in New York, Du Simitière was corresponding with him.¹¹⁰ Du Simitière could have heard of the Continental dollar from Adye or another British military correspondent, now that contact had been resumed. When Du Simitière first learned of the Continental dollar’s existence, he would make inquiries of his American acquaintances in Philadelphia—they would have never seen such a thing. Since the provenance passed through British hands, a reasonable guess was that they originated from London.

There is another point that should be emphasized about the flyer that Eagleton published. It says, “The Letters E. G, Fecit, its maker’s Name.” In other words, the issuer of the flyer did not know what the letters “E. G.” actually stood for—and thus had no direct connection to the manufacturer. This is another argument that the Continental dollar was not struck in Britain.

The Continental dollars were minted somewhere in or around New York City. After the capture of the city, most of the supply fell into British (and Hessian) hands. New York City was cut off from the rest of the United States—thus neither Paul Revere nor Pierre Du Simitière saw any before 1783. Because the Continental dollars that emerged again after 1783 and later came from British-controlled territory, the false assumption was made that they originated from London.

109. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*: 245–46.

110. Paul Ginsburg Sifton, *Pierre Eugène Du Simitière (1737–1784): Collector in Revolutionary America*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1960: 279.

QUERIES RAISED BY ERIK GOLDSTEIN

Erik Goldstein has raised several queries that he believes argue against the American circulation of Continental dollars. Two will be addressed directly. One is: “Why have none of these pewter pieces been excavated from campsites occupied by the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War? Collectively, these sites have yielded thousands of pewter buttons and small silver coins.”

Coin finds group themselves into two types.¹¹¹ First, hoards. A hoarder seeks to preserve the most valuable coins from circulation. The hoard record is skewed towards valuable coins in the precious metals of silver and gold. The other type of finds is single finds—casual losses or deliberate discards, found one at a time or in the course of archaeological excavations. Counterfeit coins are frequently found as deliberate discards, since even mere possession could lead to the gallows (as happened to poor John Jubeart). Single finds and archaeological discoveries are skewed towards counterfeits, pieces in base metals, or tiny silver coins—anything that is easy to lose. We know this instinctively—you will spend more time looking for a lost \$20 bill than you will for a lost button. Although there are cases of gold coins being found during archaeological excavations, special circumstances often explain why they were not recovered, such as being dropped into a privy.¹¹² The record of single finds and hoards, when combined, is skewed towards two extremes, like a dumbbell—on the one hand there are the counterfeit halfpence, the odd Fugio or New Jersey copper or Virginia halfpenny and especially Mexican ½ reales, the “picayunes”—on the other hand are the double eagles, the 8 reales, the half joes that are retained in hoards.¹¹³ A “middle class” coin like the pewter Continental dollar, which is large and bright enough to notice when dropped, yet, because it contains no precious metal, is not worthy of being hoarded, will not form part of the archeological record of hoards and casual losses. The noticeability of pewter dollars when dropped is proverbial—a folk expression to describe something obvious is “as bright as a pewter dollar in a mud hole.” There are thus good reasons why no Continental dollar is known with an American (or, for that matter, European¹¹⁴) findspot.

111. John M. Kleeberg, *Numismatic Finds of the Americas*. Numismatic Notes and Monographs 169 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 2009): 2–3.

112. Kleeberg, *Numismatic Finds of the Americas*: 187 (NFA 655).

113. There are European copper hoards, such as Roman third century bronzes or Venetian torneselli. But these copper hoards as a rule date from periods when coins in precious metal were scarce and so copper was hoarded instead.

114. The British Portable Antiquities Scheme has no reports of finds of Continental dollars.

Goldstein also asks: "Why do no Revolutionary War-era newspapers mention a circulating, congressionally authorized pewter dollar? This absence stands in stark contrast to the number of times that diverse aspects of Continental paper money were discussed. Money was as fascinating to newspaper readers then as it is now."

Actually, Revolutionary War-era newspapers do mention a circulating, congressionally authorized pewter dollar—they are mentioned in James Rivington's *Royal Gazette* of November 6, 1779, where Jonathan Odell's poem refers to Congress paying out pewter dollars. The brass dollars are mentioned in American newspapers of June/July 1776, and the brass and silver dollars in British newspapers of December 1776. Goldstein's query only makes sense if one first accepts his contentions that none of those three newspaper references actually refers to the Continental dollar. But accepting this for the sake of argument, it is understandable why the metal Continental dollars were not discussed. The paper currency was a matter of frequent discussion because it was an urgent problem for merchants and soldiers alike. The merchants were monitoring the rate of depreciation, to determine how much Continental currency they needed to demand to receive the proper specie equivalent for their wares. It was an urgent problem for the soldiers because, even on the infrequent occasions when they received their pay, it was paper junk that fell in value daily. Thus Continental currency was often discussed in the newspapers of the period. The Continental dollars, by contrast, which only circulated in a small way, were curiosities that would be at most of interest to the "Virtuosi" (as gentlemen antiquarian collectors were termed).

Newspapers in the 1770s were different from what we consider to be a newspaper today. Many called themselves newsletters, which is what they really were. The editors were not scrupulous about how they filled up the space between the advertisements. Little content was original, but was reprinted unchanged from other newspapers, or even from books. If space could be filled with doggerel poetry, poetry was what they published. There was no newspaper reporting in the modern sense. News was circulated by reprinting letters from correspondents in London, New York, Hamburg, Paris and other major ports and cities. The newspapers focused on the odd and curious and ignored the important. They loved obituaries of anyone who lived to be over 100—if Eric P. Newman had lived in the eighteenth century, he would have been famous for living to be 106, and not for his numismatic work. It is not surprising that there are so few references to the Continental dollar coins in the newspapers of the time.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE CONTINENTAL DOLLARS?

If the Continental dollars were to sustain the value of the Continental paper currency, that could have been accomplished by a sinking fund backed by specie, rather than minting a new coin. If the Continental coins were intended to be a multidenominational issue, with the brass pieces serving as pennies, it would have been better to strike to the widely accepted size of the British halfpenny, rather than adopting a large size that was difficult to strike. And why coin dollars anyway? Surely the Patriot cause had more pressing concerns than the need for a new coin.

To answer this question we should put ourselves back into the period of 1776 and understand for what purpose coins of this type would have been needed and used.

The answer is to recruit soldiers. This elaborate, formalistic process provided popular entertainment in towns in the early modern period. The Irish playwright George Farquhar, who himself had served as a recruiting officer, used the subject for an extremely popular comedy, *The Recruiting Officer* of 1706. A recruiting sergeant would go through a town with a drummer, gathering a crowd and giving a speech of which Farquhar's satirical version is not too far from the truth:

If any Gentlemen Soldiers, or others, have a mind to serve her Majesty, and pull down the *French* king; If any Prentices have severe Masters, any Children have undutiful Parents: if any Servants have too little Wages, or any Husband too much Wife: let them repair to the noble Sergeant *Kite* at the sign of the *Raven*, in this good Town of *Shrewsbury*, and they shall receive present Relief and Entertainment—Gentlemen I don't beat my Drums to insnare or inveigle any Man, for you must know Gentlemen, that I am a man of Honour; Besides, I don't beat up for common Soldiers; no, I list only Granadeers. Granadeers, Gentlemen—Pray, Gentlemen, observe this Cap—This is the Cap of Honour, it dubs a Man a Gentleman in the drawing of a Tricker; and he that has the good Fortune to be born six Foot high, was born to be a great Man—Sir, will you give me leave to try this Cap upon your head?¹¹⁵

The crucial transaction in recruiting was to hand over a coin, popularly known as “the king's shilling”—although Farquhar wrote during the reign of

115. George Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer* (London: no pub., 1760): 8–9.

Queen Anne, so in his play all references to the British monarch are to the Queen. The acceptance of this coin meant the recruit was enlisted. If he denied it, his pockets could be searched and the discovery of a valuable coin in his possession would prove to the local magistrate that he had, indeed, enlisted. This stage business in Farquhar gives an idea of how possession of the coin was considered conclusive proof:

Kite: They disobey Command, they deny being listed.

Plume: That's easily known; have either of you receiv'd any of the Queen's Money?

Cost: Not a Brass Farthing, Sir.

....

Plume: The Queen's Money was in your Pockets, my Serjeant was ready to take his Oath you were listed.¹¹⁶

(This also gives us an idea of how scarce gold and silver coins must have been among the young country boys who were being recruited into the British military—if a lad had two guineas in his possession, one could plausibly assume that he had got them from a recruiting sergeant.)

In Farquhar's time the standard amount was more than a shilling—it was two guineas, which in 1706 were valued at 40 shillings.¹¹⁷ (The guinea fluctuated much in value after it was first issued, rising as high as 30 shillings when the silver coinage was in its lamentable state before the great recoinage of 1696. The guinea then fell in value. When Farquhar wrote a guinea was worth 20 shillings, but it later increased. From 1717 onwards the guinea's value was fixed at 21 shillings.)

In republican America the inapplicable term “the King's shilling” was replaced by “bounty money,” and the payment of bounties to volunteers upon recruitment would persist as late as the U.S. Civil War. For recruiters for the Continental Army the coin of choice was not the guinea, but the silver dollar. Joseph Plumb Martin gives a vivid description of how, after people's attention was attracted by the drumming of the recruiting sergeant, silver dollars were offered to enlist recruits:

Soldiers for Boston were in requisition. A dollar deposited upon the drum was taken up by some one as soon as placed there, and the holder's name taken, and he enrolled with orders to equip himself as quick as possible. My spirits began to revive at the sight of the money offered; . . . O, thought I, if I were but old enough to put myself forward, I would be

¹¹⁶ Farquhar, *Recruiting Officer*: 34–35.

¹¹⁷ Farquhar, *Recruiting Officer*: 57.

the possessor of one dollar, the dangers of war to the contrary notwithstanding.¹¹⁸

In America, too, the acceptance of the money would “seal the deal” for enlistment. In 1777, a friend of Joseph Plumb Martin talked him into enlisting again. Martin agreed, but then changed his mind, and wanted to get out of his promise. Martin was able to do so successfully because “I had taken no bounty money.”¹¹⁹

Of course, the coins would not remain with the new recruits very long—sites of army encampments, whether British or American, do not produce masses of guineas and silver dollars. Young men are never good at holding onto money, and within a few days of the guineas or dollars coming into their hands they would have been spent in the taverns or the stews of the town.

In those less-literate times imagery could have a great impact. Accepting a gold or silver coin with an image of the monarch conveyed a sense of obligation, and the new recruit would always have before his eyes an image of his new benefactor, whom he had sworn to serve. This would not necessarily be a problem for the American recruiters, because the Spanish milled dollar had depicted no monarch, but only the arms of Spain and the two hemispheres between two pillars. Unfortunately for the young American Republic, about to swear off allegiance to all monarchs in the world, on the very threshold of the Revolution in 1771–72 the Spanish modernized their coinage in order to catch up with the Bourbon big sibling next door. France had depicted its king on its silver coins for years, it was time for Spain to do the same. Spain issued a new bust coinage with the monarch on the obverse, carrying out at the same time a secret debasement of the fineness from 917 to 903. Because of Gresham’s Law the new, debased bust silver coinage drove the old pillar dollars out of circulation. How could one convey that American recruits owed their loyalty to Congress, and not to Charles III of Spain?

The answer was to mint a new coin, with American imagery, that could be used to enlist recruits, which emphasized the allegiance to Congress and the thirteen States. The striking “Fugio” and ring designs on the Continental currency issue of February 17, 1776 provided a ready model.

As it turned out, despite the existence of patriotic individuals who were ready to supply their own precious metal for the American cause, there was not enough bullion to produce an issue entirely of silver Continental dollars. So the resort was made to issuing dollars in silvered brass. But brass, too, had its problems: It was hard on the dies, and the Americans were collecting all the brass available to make ordinance. So there was a third alternative—pewter. This was a logical

118. [Joseph Plumb Martin], *A Narrative of Some of the Dangers, Adventures and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier* (Hallowell: [James Sullivan Martin], 1830): 8.

119. [Martin], *Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*: 44–45.

alternative—many of the dollars in circulation in the colonies were silvered brass and pewter facsimiles. It is known that most of the copper coinage in circulation was counterfeit. It can also be determined, from the counterfeit half joes bearing Caribbean counterstamps and marks of North American regulators, that most gold was counterfeit too.¹²⁰ It is plausible to assume that the silver coin was as well. In passing on silver, silvered brass, and pewter dollars to the new recruits, the Continental dollar makers were not really defrauding them—they were, rather, furnishing dollars minted to the same standard as generally prevailed throughout the colonies. The dollar coinage in circulation already was a mix of silver, silvered brass, and pewter coins—the Continental dollars would easily find their way among them like Mao Zedong's proverbial fish in the water. Johann Conrad Döhla, a German soldier from Ansbach-Bayreuth who had fought for the British and had been taken prisoner at Yorktown, describes how this could work in Winchester, Virginia, in November 1781:

At the beginning everything could be obtained at a favorable price, because the local inhabitants liked our good hard money, because in Virginia the paper money issued by Congress is very common. Local inhabitants came to market who were not acquainted with our money at all, neither Spanish nor English—so the English prisoners were able to pass off much tin, lead, and other metals.¹²¹

It was not the case that Continental dollars were to be accepted as a fiat currency—there was no government authority saying, “You must accept these coins.” Rather, counterfeits were accepted as a general convenience—life was simpler if everyone accepted them and passed them on to the next person, rather than making a fuss. Stephen Mihm depicts the United States as a country that operated with a circulating medium provided by an unscrupulous private sector of wildcat banks and counterfeiters. “It was a popular remark among men of business at this time that they preferred a good counterfeit upon a solid bank than any genuine bill upon [a] shyster institution.”¹²² The point was not whether the money was real or counterfeit, the point was to keep it circulating. As it was, many of the farmer lads who were being recruited had seen so few dollars that they probably could not tell the difference either way.

120. Ralph C. Gordon, *West Indies countermarked gold coins* ([San Juan, PR?]: ERIK Press).

121. Johann Conrad Döhla, *Tagebuch eines Bayreuther Soldaten aus dem Nordamerikanischen Freiheitskrieg von 1777 bis 1783* (Bayreuth: Lorenz Ellwanger, 1913), 166.

122. Stephen Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007): 10.

CONCLUSION

The technical specifications of the Continental dollar coins point to an American origin. The floreate edge indicates that the pieces were intended to circulate as money. A comparison of the Continental dollar to British eighteenth-century medals shows that the pieces do not resemble contemporary medals in the least—they are coins. The inscriptions have numerous misspellings such as would be committed by someone whose first language was not English, but French. The dies were engraved by Elisha Gallaudet, a member of a French Huguenot family. The Continental dollar was minted in New York City and probably intended to pay recruiting bounties to enlisting soldiers. Because the British suddenly captured New York City in 1776, a large group of pristine Continental dollars fell into British and Hessian hands, and people in American-held territory never saw the coin. As the American War wound down in the wake of the British defeat at Yorktown and the British and their Hessian allies began to evacuate New York City, they took the pieces back with them as curiosities. The coins then became a collectors' item in Germany and England.

APPENDIX: LITERARY EVIDENCE ABOUT THE CONTINENTAL DOLLARS

1. Newspaper Reports, June 27 and July 3, 1776

NEW-YORK, July 1.

We hear it is proposed, that after three months, the currency of all copper coin, made of base metal, or wanting in weight, to be totally suppressed, and that the rest is to pass at the rate of 15 for an eighth of a dollar. And if it shall appear that there is not a sufficiency for common use, that it will all be called in, and a new impression struck of Continental copper coin, of a large size, twelve of which is to pass for an eighth part of a dollar, of which no other coppers are to pass current."

Sources

The New-York Journal, or The General Advertiser, No. 1747 (New York: Thursday, June 27, 1776) p. [3], col. [4]. (This version does not say that the news comes from New York, nor does it have the dateline of July 1—those two features appear in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*.)

The Connecticut Journal Issue 455 (New Haven: Wednesday, July 3, 1776) p. [2], col. [1].

Pennsylvania Gazette No. 2480 (Philadelphia: Wednesday, July 3, 1776) p. [2], col. [3].

These were obtained from the Readex database *America's Historical Newspapers*.

2. Reports in London newspapers, December 21–24, 1776.

Letters from an officer of the 64th Reg. in York Island to his friend in town. “The Congress have established a Mint at Philadelphia, where they coin Copper and Silver pieces about the Size of Half-a-Crown; In Silver they go for twelve Shillings, in copper for Fourteen-Pence.”

Sources

The St. James's Chronicle, or British Evening-Post No. 2463 (Saturday, December 21 to Tuesday December 24, 1776) p. [3].

The Public Advertiser No. 13167 (Tuesday, December 24, 1776), p. [2], col. [2].

Lloyd's Evening Post 39, no. 3042 (Monday December 23 to Wednesday December 25, 1776), 610.

“Notes and Queries,” *American Journal of Numismatics* 26, no. 2 (October 1891): 45.

Note: The text of the three newspapers come from the Gale database *17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, a collection that is now in the British Library. The article cited in the *American Journal of Numismatics* is from the *London Chronicle*. Unfortunately the Burney Collection lacks *London Chronicle* Issue 3128, where the article probably appeared. All sources are identical, with only minor differences, mostly in capitalization of words. The *London Chronicle/American Journal of Numismatics* article, however, identifies the letter as coming from the officer of the 64th Regiment on York Island, whereas the other three newspapers do not.

3. Jonathan Odell, “The Congratulation,” November 6, 1779

Whoever these important points explains,
Congress will nobly pay him for his pains,
Of pewter dollars what both hands can hold,
A thimble-full of plate, a mite of gold;
The lands of some big Tory he shall get,

And strut a famous Col'nel *en brevet*:
 And last to honour him (we scorn to bribe)
 We'll make him Chief of the *Oneida* Tribe.

Sources

"THE CONGRATULATION. A POEM," *Royal Gazette* No. 324 (New York: Saturday November 6, 1779) p. [2]. The newspaper text was obtained from the Readex database *America's Historical Newspapers*.

Winthrop Sargent, *The Loyal Verses of Joseph Stansbury and Dr. Jonathan Odell*. Munsell's Historical Series 6 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1860), 50. Sargent gives the text of the sixth line as "And start a famous Colonel *en brevet*." The newspaper text has "strut," rather than "start," which makes better sense.

4. Karl Spener (1749–1827) to Benjamin Franklin, May 26, 1783 (excerpts from the relevant parts of the French original)

Berlin le 26 May 1783

Monsieur

Ayant dessein de publier, vers le fin de Septembre, un Almanac américain en allemande pour l'année prochaine, et desirant le decourer de plusieurs Estampes y relatives, dont la composition ne doit point être idéale; c'est à Vous, Monsieur, et à Votre portefeuille, qui doit être très riche en tout ce qui rapport à l'histoire des Colonies anglo-américaines que j'ose recourir, bien que je n'aye point l'honneur de Vous être connu.....

...je désirerois de pouvoir joindre les morceaux suivants:

Espèces monnoyées aux Armes des 13 Etats

Source

American Philosophical Society, Yale University, and the Packard Humanities Institute, "The Papers of Benjamin Franklin," franklinpapers.org.

English translation of the entire letter:

Berlin, May 26, 1783

Sir

I plan to publish around the end of September an American almanac in German for next year, and wishing to illustrate it with numerous engravings and the like, which do not need to be entirely perfect in their execution, it is to you, sir, and your collection of illustrations, which must be very ample in everything that refers to the history of the Anglo-American colonies to which I dare to have recourse, even if I have not yet had the honor of making your acquaintance.

Allow me sir briefly to outline to you the plan of this almanac and if afterwards I request your gracious assistance, whether it be for information or for the actual articles I need it is because certainly no one is in a better position to furnish me with this material than you are, sir!

In the first place the almanac will contain the history of the Revolution according to the best authors and the most authentic sources that one can obtain. This subject will be illustrated with historic engravings, representing the most notable events of this war. *In the second place:* A gallery of the great men of America with a summary of their political or military careers decorated with their portraits, copied on the basis of those drawn by Du Simitière at Philadelphia and on others that have appeared in England. Since you, sir, hold such a high rank among the great men of America, will you allow me to ask if your portrait, as it was engraved in 1782 by Pelicier for the Essay concerning the Anglo-Americans is enough of a likeness to serve as a model?

In order to make this gallery more complete I will pass from the great men to the celebrated men of America and it is there where I am in need of the following portraits:

Portrait of John Adams

Ditto of Mr. Payne, author of *Common Sense*

Ditto of Dr. Warren, killed at Bunker Hill

Ditto of General Montgomery, killed at Quebec

Ditto of Mr. Paul Jones, Commodore in the service of the United States.

To these portraits I would like to add the following pieces:

Mausoleum erected by order of Congress for Dr. Warren
 Ditto in the memory of General Montgomery
 Medal struck by order of Congress upon the taking of Major
 André
 Ditto on the occasion of the peace to eternalize the history of
 the Revolution
 Form of the paper money
 Coins struck with the arms of the thirteen states
 The arms of the thirteen states
 The flag of the thirteen states *in color*
 Uniform of the American troops, called the Washington Regi-
 ment and Gates Regiment, *in color*
 The historical part of this almanac being entrusted to one of our
 best historians, Mr. Sprengel, Professor of History at the Univer-
 sity of Halle, who possesses a profound knowledge of English
 and has all the knowledge and qualities that constitute a good
 historian, I dare to flatter myself that the work will merit your
 approval. Also I reserve to myself the honor to present it to you,
 sir, and even, through your intermediation, to the honorable
 members of Congress to whom I wish to pay homage.

Pardon me, sir, in favor of this idea, that I dare to interrupt your
 serious occupations by extraneous concerns of this type and do
 me the favor of conceding my most humble request.

Finally allow me to add that the time from now until the end
 of the September, the term fixed for the publication of the al-
 manacs of our country, is not far off, and the execution of the
 different engravings will take considerable time, so that by sup-
 plying me as soon as possible with the material I lack you will
 add infinitely to the benefit I request. He gives twice as much
 who gives quickly.

May it be permitted to me, sir, to witness to you here the liveli-
 est felt veneration and respect with which I am filled for the
 philosopher and the statesman of two hemispheres—in you! It
 is in these sentiments that I have the honor of being, sir, your
 most submissive and obedient

Charles Spener
Royal Bookseller

Endorsed: Charles Spener 26 May 1783

5. Matthias Christian Sprengel and engravings illustrating his work,
September 1783 (Fig. 7).

Münzen

Die erste der hier abgebildeten ist eine Denkmünze auf den Frieden, welche der Congreß zu Verewigung dieser Begebenheit und des wirksamen Antheils, den Frankreich daran genommen, in Paris hat ausprägen lassen. Sie zeigt auf der Vorderseite den neuen Freystaat von Nordamerica unter dem Bilde eines Hercules, als Kind mit Schlangen kämpfend, und zum Zeichen, das dieses Kind unter Waffen gebohren ward, sitzt es, statt der Wiege in einem auf dem Boden liegenden Schilde. Ein Leopard (der Schildhalter des englischen Wappens und hier das Sinnbild Großbritanniens) will auf das dem Anschein nach wehrlose Kind eindringen, wird aber durch eine weibliche Figur daran verhindert, die dasselbe mit ihrem Schilde bedeckt und mit ihrer Lanze dem Leoparden eine tödtlichen Stoß beyzubringen im Begriff ist. Daß diese Figur Frankreich vorstelle, zeigen die Lilien an; im Abschnitte lieset man zwey für die Freywerdung von America gleich merkwürdige Data. Die Rückseite dieser Denkmünze zeigt das Profil eines schönen Frauenzimmerkopfes mit fließendem Haar. Hinter ihrem Nacken ragt, als hielt sie ihn in der Hand, ein Stab hervor, auf welchen man den runden Freiheitshut, pileus, das Sinnbild der republicanischen Verfassung erblickt. Die Umschrift sagt, wer diese Figur sey: *Libertas Americana*—das freye Nordamerica.

Das zweyte, was hier in Gestalt einer Münze erscheint, macht eigentlich den in dieser Form copirten Stempel aus, mit welchem das Papiergeld der Provinz Pensilvanien bezeichnet ist. Jede Provinz hat zu ihrem Papiergelde eigne Stempel dieser Art; weil nun der pensilvanische unter allen am mehresten characteristisch ist, da er die genaue Vereinigung der dreyzehn



Figure 7. The illustration in the Allgemeines Historisches Taschenbuch (<https://archive.org/details/allgemeineshistooospre/page/n205>). Internet Archive.

Provinzen nebst dem Mittelpunkt ihrer Conföderation zeigt, auf der anderen Seite aber dem Volke die Flüchtigkeit der Zeit und Wichtigkeit dessen, was es beginnt, vorhält, mithin in eine bis jetzt auf currenten Münzen ganz ungewöhnliche Idee enthält: so hat man geglaubt, ihn vor allen andern hier abbilden zu müssen. Damit die Innschriften gleich volle Wirkung thun möchten, sind sie, zum Behuf des deutschen Lesers, übersetzt eingetragen; sie bedürfen daher keiner weitem Erklärung, sondern allenfalls noch die Hinzufügung der Ursprache—we are one—American Congress—Continental Currency—fugio—mind your business.

Source

M. C. Sprengel, *Allgemeines historisches Taschenbuch oder Abriss der merkwürdigsten neuesten Welt-Begebenheiten enthaltend für 1784 die Geschichte der Revolution von Nord-Amerika* [*General Historical Pocket Reference Book or Outline of the Most Remarkable Newest Happenings in the World Containing for 1784 the History of the Revolution of North America*] (Berlin: Haude und Spender, [September 1783]), pp. 179–80 and 2 engravings.

Translation

Coins

The first of those depicted here is a medal for the peace, which Congress, to perpetuate this fact and the active share that France had in it, had struck in Paris. It shows on the obverse the new free state of North America depicted as a Hercules, fighting as a child with snakes, and as a sign that this child was born under arms, it sits in a shield lying on the ground, instead of in a cradle. A leopard (the supporter of the English arms and here the image of Great Britain) wants to pounce on the apparently helpless child, but is prevented by a female figure in that she covers the child with her shield and is about to give the leopard a fatal blow with her lance. That this figure represents France is shown by the lilies; in the exergue one reads two equally noteworthy dates in the liberation of America. The reverse of this medal shows the profile of a beautiful head of a woman with flowing hair. A rod rises up behind her neck, as though she were holding it in her hand, on which one can see the round Liberty cap, the “pileus,” the image of a republican constitution. The inscription says who this figure is: “Libertas Americana,” the free North America.

The second [illustration] that appears in the shape of a coin copies in this form the stamp that distinguishes the paper money of the province of Pennsylvania. Every province has for its paper money unique stamps of this type; because the Pennsylvania money is the most characteristic, because it displays the exact union of the thirteen provinces with their center point in the

confederation, on the other side however it puts before the people the fleetingness of time and the importance [of completing] what one begins, and therefore contains a wholly extraordinary idea that until now has not been expressed on circulating coins; for this reason one thought that it must be illustrated here before all others. In order that the inscriptions may have their full effect they have been entered in translation for the assistance of the German reader; so they need no further explanation but at most the addition of them in their original language—we are one—American Congress—Continental Currency—fugio—mind your business.

Note: The engraving illustrates a Libertas Americana medal and a Continental dollar; the latter has its inscriptions translated into German; the engraving is by Daniel Berger (1744–1825).

6. Pierre Eugène Du Simitière, Common Place Book: Sketch of a Plan of a Work intended to illustrate the Revolution in North America by Medals, Seals, Coins, Devices, Statues, Monuments, Badges &c.
[1783– before October 1784]

Historical Outline

....

18th a Coin of the Size of a Crown with devices and mottoes taken from the continental paper money, Struckt [sic] in London on Type-Metal, and dated 1776.

Sources

Paul Ginsburg Sifton, *Pierre Eugène Du Simitière (1737–1784): Collector in Revolutionary America*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1960: 415.

Joel J. Orosz, *The Eagle that is Forgotten* (Wolfeboro, NH: Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc., 1988): 26–27.

7. Flyer, prepared ca. 1783–90, preserved in the collection of Sarah Sophia Banks:

These American MEDALS at
Six-Pence Each.

N.B. Representing the Paper Currency of a Dollar, which goes for Four Shillings and Six-pence in that Country.

EXPLANATION

The Thirteen Colonies united like a Chain, with the Names of each on the Ringlets, the Words “AMERICAN CONGRESS” within, in the Center, “WE ARE ONE,” and with the Rays of the Sun shooting to each Ringlet, as a Glory.

The Reverse is the Sun going round its Orbit, with a Motto “FUGIO,” signifying, I fly; under the Dial is “MIND YOUR BUSINESS.” The Date, 1776, is the time they declared Independency.

The Letters E. G, FECIT, its maker’s Name.

Source

Catherine Eagleton, “Collecting America: Sarah Sophia Banks and the ‘Continental Dollar’ of 1776,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 174 (2014): 301.

8. Jonas Carl Dryander, and/or Sarah Sophia Banks, Catalog notation,
ca. 1783–90, later transcribed by Sarah Sophia Banks

Congress Dollar 1776 never current, struck on speculation in Europe, for sale in America

Source

Catherine Eagleton, “Collecting America: Sarah Sophia Banks and the ‘Continental Dollar’ of 1776,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 174 (2014): 301.

9. Richard Watson, before February 9, 1786

It is reported of *James I.* that he melted down and coined all the brass guns in Ireland, and afterwards proceeded to coin the pewter with this inscription—*Melioris tessera fati* [Tokens of better times]. The *Congress in America* had recourse to the same expedient; they coined several pieces of about an inch and a half in diameter and of 240 grains in weight; on one side of which was inscribed in a circular ring near the edge *Continental Currency, 1776*—and within the ring a rising sun, with—*fugio*—at the side of it, shining upon a dial, under which was—*Mind your business.*—On the reverse were thirteen small circles joined together like the links of a chain, on each of which was inscribed the name of some one of the thirteen states; on another circular ring, within these, was inscribed, - *American Congress*—and in the central space—*We are One.*—I have been particular in the mention of this piece of money, because like the leaden money that was struck at *Vienna*, when that city was besieged by the Turks in 1529, it will soon become a

great curiosity. I estimated the weight of a cubic foot of this Continental currency, it was equal to 7440 ounces: this exceeds the weight of a cubic foot of our best sort of pewter, and fall short of our worst; I conjecture that the metal of the Continental currency consisted of 12 parts of tin and 1 of lead.

Source

Richard Watson, *Chemical Essays* 4 (Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1786): 135–37. (Preface dated February 9, 1786.)

10. *New Haven Gazette*, December 12, 1788

NEW HAVEN, Dec. 11.

The following extract from the learned Bishop Watson's *Chemical Essays* Vol 4 page 136 shews how easily strange errors are introduced into the writings even of careful men when they write on any subject relative to distant countries. It is probable that some workman amused himself with copying one of the small bills emitted by Congress, into a die or mould, and then impressed or cast a piece of Pewter such as the Bishop has described. If the author of that work should publish a future edition, it is hoped that clause will be omitted.

[The passage then goes on to quote the passage from Richard Watson's work, beginning with "It is reported of James II" and ending with "12 parts of tin and 1 of lead," that is quoted above.]

Source

New Haven Gazette and the Connecticut Magazine 3, no. 49 (New Haven: Josiah Meigs, Thursday, December 11, 1788) [6]. Obtained from the Readex database *America's Historical Newspapers*.

11. Paul Revere, letter to Richard Watson, February 21, 1790

BOSTON N ENGLAND Feb^y 21 1790

REVEREND SIR

In perusing your invaluable *Chemical Essays* Vol 4 page 136, you make mention of pewter money coined by the American Congress, and give a discription of it. The

very great pleasure which I have received from the perusal of those Volumes, and the exceeding good character I have heard of you, from some of your Countrymen, as a *Man*, and for fear some person of more consequence, has not endeavoured to set you right in that piece of History; I have inclosed you two pieces of money, one of them was printed under the direction of the American Congress, the other I am not so fully assured off [sic]; as they both answer to your description, except the mettall, I have sent them, supposing, if you were not possessed of them before, they might be acceptable to you as curiosities. As for pewter money, struck in America, I never saw any. I have made careful inquiry, and have all the reason in the world to believe, that you were imposed upon by those who informed you.

I am Sir with respect & esteem

Your most humble servant

PAUL REVERE

The Reverend R. Watson

Bishop of Landaff [sic? The correct spelling would be Llandaff]

Sources

Elbridge Henry Goss, *The Life of Colonel Paul Revere* (Boston: Joseph George Cupples, 1891): 534–35.

Philip L. Mossman, “Paul Revere: A Colonial Jack of All Trades,” *Colonial Newsletter* 37, no. 3 (106) (December 1996): 1756.

